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THE SAILOR KING



The Honible Mrs. Norton.
From a drawing by Hayter.
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THE SAILOR KING

William the Fourth

His Court and His Subjects

By FITZGERALD MOLLOY

Author of "*The Queen's Comrade*"

"*The Most Gorgeous Lady Blessington*"

"*Court Life Below Stairs*," "*The Life*

and Adventures of Peg Woffington"

VOL. II

WITH EIGHTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS IN-
CLUDING TWO PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES

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CHAPTER I

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CHAPTER I

POLITICAL events that became directly responsible for one of the most sensational social scandals of the century, now unfolded themselves ; brief mention of which is necessary. It will be remembered that Lord Melbourne became prime minister in July 1834, with Lord Althorp as Leader of the House of Commons. Four months later on the 10th of November the latter succeeded his father as sixth Earl Spencer. Elevation to the Lords of a minister who exercised so powerful an influence in the Lower House embarrassed the Government, in which he was a bond of union. Correspondence passed between the King then at Brighton, and Lord Melbourne, which eventually resulted in the prime minister being summoned by His Majesty.

Driving from London on Thursday, November 15th, Lord Melbourne reached Brighton tired and travel-stained, early in the evening, and without delay presented himself at the Pavilion, where the Sovereign received him in his usual bluff, unceremonious manner, and shaking hands with him said : " Come, we are just

going to dinner, and won't talk business till afterwards." The meal over, they retired to discuss the political situation, when in the course of conversation Lord Melbourne stated that notwithstanding its difficulties he "was ready to go on with the Government, if such was His Majesty's pleasure"; and suggested the names of three of his colleagues who were able and willing to supply the vacant leadership. None of these met with the King's approval; whilst one of them, Lord John Russell, whom he regarded as "a dangerous little Radical," was abhorrent to him. The dilemma regarding the leadership was increased by the fact that the Cabinet was divided against itself, on the subject of freeing Irish Catholics from the taxation of supporting an alien Church. The King, who was bewildered and distressed, declared he must have time for consideration, and requested Lord Melbourne to call on him next morning. When they met the Sovereign handed the premier a letter he might show his colleagues. In this, after passing some complimentary remarks on Lord Melbourne whom he always liked because of his straightforward candour, the King stated that he had lost confidence in his present Government, that he felt other arrangements to be necessary, and that it was his intention to entrust the formation of a Cabinet to the Duke of Wellington.

Lord Melbourne, who was neither surprised at his dismissal nor displeased at being relieved from the cares of office, cheerily answered that the duke would

doubtlessly get His Majesty out of his difficulties ; and on a question arising as to who should convey the official announcement of his own dismissal and his rival's appointment, the fallen minister said : " No messenger shall go as quick as I shall ; you had better give it to me " ; and he delivered the communication that evening at Apsley House.

As it was late when he reached London, he contented himself with calling a cabinet meeting for the following midday, without stating his reasons or giving any information to his fellow ministers. Six of them had been present at a dinner party at Holland House that evening, where he had been expected. One of these, Lord Brougham, when on his way home, called at the Treasury and was shown into the library where he found Melbourne, who had just returned and was sitting in his travelling cap, calmly reading by the light of two candles. " What news ? " asked the visitor. " What will surprise you," answered Melbourne as he handed him the King's letter. Brougham always excitable expressed his fury in a torrent of words : but in response to Melbourne's entreaty promised he would not tell the news to any one until next day.

Hurrying from the Treasury he drove to the office of the *Times*, in whose columns next morning appeared an article stating that the Government had been dismissed, which electrified the town, as much as its final sentence, " And the Queen has done it all," roused it to indignation with Her Majesty, who was unjustly

blamed ; for it was not until the decision had been made, and Lord Melbourne had left Brighton that the King told his consort the ministry was out. Her delight found expression in the phrase, "All England will rejoice" ; when she was answered, "That is as may be, madam." The majority of the ministers had the strange experience of first learning through the columns of a newspaper that they were no longer in office ; information some of them refused to credit, until assured of it at the cabinet meeting, by the premier, who was so far from being vexed that he declared ; "I was never so happy ; but I suppose I shall soon be damned tired for want of something to do, as all are who leave office." Three nights later he went to Drury Lane theatre, where seated in a box with some of his colleagues, he witnessed a play called *The Regent*, whose sarcasms and jokes about the dismissal of ministers caused his joyous laugh to ring through the house.

On being summoned by his Sovereign, the Duke of Wellington immediately set out for Brighton. Speaking of the interview that followed their meeting, his grace afterwards told Charles Greville that, "When the King was reading the papers to him and telling him all that had passed, he was in a great fright lest the duke should think he had acted imprudently, and should decline to accept the Government. The duke then said : "Sir, I see at once how it all is. Your Majesty has not been left by your ministers, but something very like it."

Fully aware that he was less able and not so popular as Robert Peel, who later was described by Guizot as "the most liberal of Conservatives, the most conservative of Liberals, and the most capable man of all in both parties," the duke was willing to sacrifice his ambitions for the good of his cause ; and therefore assured the King that as the great difficulty would arise in the House of Commons, it would be wiser that Sir Robert Peel should be made prime minister. As His Majesty preferred to see Wellington fill that office, he dissented from the suggestion, pointing out amongst other objections that Sir Robert was then in Italy travelling for his pleasure, and even if summoned with all imaginable haste, could not be back within four weeks. The duke, however, was firm in his resolution not to undertake the premiership ; but he offered to conduct the Government until Peel's return, filling up no offices and taking no measures meantime, unless such as were absolutely necessary ; and stating that he would serve with him, or under him, or not at all, as might be thought best.

Sir Robert Peel, at this time in his forty-sixth year, was the second baronet of his name. A grandson of that Robert Peel who had been the pioneer of the calico-printing industry in Lancashire, and son of one who, whilst taking his share in the management of that prosperous concern, likewise legislated for his country, the future premier inherited their powers of organisation and businesslike habits. When "a light-haired, blue-eyed, fair-complexioned, smiling, good-natured

boy" at Harrow, he had Byron for his schoolfellow. His industry there was continued at Christ Church, Oxford, where he won a double first class in classics and mathematics. At the age of one-and-twenty he entered Parliament where he made the best first speech heard within its walls since the days of Pitt; and when twenty-four was appointed chief secretary for Ireland, a position full of risk and difficulty, which he held for six years, and under three viceroys.

Though a Tory he had introduced and carried the Catholic Emancipation Bill, for which he had been called a traitor and an apostate; and whilst actively opposing the Reform Bill as "an ill-advised reconstruction of the constitution" he had stated, that there might have been proposed certain alterations to which he would have assented. Deliberate in his speech he was prompt in emergency; his strong physique enabled him to work sixteen hours a day when necessary, keeping meanwhile his highly strung temperament under an iron control, that made him appear hard and cold to his associates. His great interests were centred in politics, but at the same time he had high appreciation of art that led to his collecting pictures by the great masters for his gallery, that was already famous, additions to which he was at this time purchasing.

On the King agreeing to send for him, the selection of a speedy and trusty messenger was considered, when Sir Herbert Taylor suggested Mr. James Hudson, once a page, but now gentleman usher to the Queen. On His Majesty approving of him, Sir Herbert hurried

to ask Hudson if he would like to go abroad. The latter, at this time in his twenty-fourth year, who was anxious to enter the diplomatic service for which his education, not only at Rugby and Westminster, but at Paris and Rome, had fitted him, and who foresaw in this journey some possibility of winning his desire, replied that nothing would please him better. "Then," said Sir Herbert, "you must start to-morrow morning in search of Sir Robert Peel, and take him a letter from the King and one from the Duke of Wellington."

Next day, Sunday, the messenger left Brighton, and on reaching London drove to Sir Robert Peel's house, and made enquiries as to where he might be found; but beyond the fact that Sir Robert and Lady Peel with their daughter, were travelling in Italy, no information could be given him. Hudson next went to the keeper of the Privy Purse to obtain five hundred pounds from him, the amount he considered necessary for his expenses. The Keeper declared he had nothing like the sum in hand and anxiety was felt as to where it could be got. Eventually it was procured from Herries Bank, when the messenger started on his journey. Arrived in Paris he immediately went to the British Embassy to make enquiries; but all Lord Granville, then ambassador, could tell him was, that Sir Robert Peel desired his letters to be kept there and not sent after him; and that it was generally supposed he was still in Italy.

Away went Hudson once more, travelling by night and day, seeking and enquiring at every town of importance he passed through ; changing from one coach to another, skirting the dangerous passes of Mont Cenis, rattling over wretched, bone-shaking roads, through isolated villages, and the wild bandit-haunted tracks of the Campagna, until at last exhausted, feverish and impatient, on the ninth day from his leaving England he sighted the eternal city seated on its seven hills, whose poplars rose dark and sad against the azure, whose innumerable turrets and towers, dominated by one vast dome, lay in a haze before his weary and eager eyes. Here it was hoped his journey might end. Though his enquiries were met at first by the shrugging of shoulders, and the general indifference of laziness, he was not disheartened, and after a while was able to trace his quest to the hotel de l'Europe. Enquiries there told him that Sir Robert was at a ball given by the Duchess of Torlonia, but Lady Peel was in her apartments. To her Hudson delivered his letters, saying he would return early in the morning for their answer, and taking his leave, sought a sound night's sleep.

One of these written by Sir Herbert Taylor, beginning, "My dear Sir Robert," said : "The King has ordered me to introduce to you Mr. Hudson, who is the bearer of His Majesty's and the Duke of Wellington's letters to you. He is resident Gentleman Usher to the Queen, and has always been employed confidentially by the King, who has the

highest opinion of him, which he well merits. I may add that he is deservedly a general favourite in this circle." It might have been thought that this recommendation would have secured a courteous reception to its weary bearer, but on calling on Sir Robert next morning he saw the statesman standing erect, cool, and commanding, behind a table crowded with papers, across which he formally bowed. Then fixing his cold critical blue eyes on the tired face of the Court Mercury, he enquired what day he had left London, and at what hour he had reached Rome. On being answered he said drily, "I think you might have made the journey in a day less, by taking another route." With this he handed the despatches he had already written to Hudson who, diplomatically smothering his fury, set out with them for England in the same hour.

Retracing his road with almost equal speed, for some suspense was felt regarding Sir Robert's answer, all went well with Hudson until he reached Boulogne, where he had the vexation to see the mail packet steaming out of the harbour. As it was impossible to overtake her, he bribed some fishermen by the offer of a large sum, to take him across the channel in their boat. The weather being fine the passage was safely made, but on catching sight of the white cliffs of Dover, a panic seized the fisherfolk, who asserted that if they ventured near the shore they would be taken prisoners ; and neither expostulations nor the offer of a further sum could induce them

to land him. In despair Hudson made signals to some vessels in the offing, one of which put out a boat, came to his rescue, and set him on land. Quick as four horses could carry him he travelled to London, and going straight to Apsley House delivered his letters, which were immediately forwarded to Windsor, where the King was then staying.

By this time Hudson was so tired that he hurried to his rooms at St. James's Palace, and fell into a prolonged sleep. On waking he was far from comforted by the news that "he had got into a devil of a scrape, by omitting to present the letter for the King on the previous night." On this he started for Windsor, and on entering an ante-room of the Castle, met an old servant, who said : "I did not think you were so green as to come with the letter, after making the mistake you have done." Taking the hint, he left Sir Robert's letter to His Majesty, and made his way back to town, and for nearly a month he did not venture to present himself before the Sovereign, who was exceedingly angry with him. At the end of that time he was advised to wait upon His Majesty, who after some hasty expressions not only forgave, but told him to keep the balance of seventy pounds he had left unspent out of the five hundred he had taken with him. Though Sir Robert Peel did not consider the Gentleman Usher's journey had been made as speedily as might have been, others thought it a marvellous expedition ; and henceforth he was known as "Hurried Hudson." Later he became Sir James Hudson, was

appointed Minister at Turin, and proved himself an excellent diplomatist, who was largely instrumental in promoting Cavour's policy.

On the day succeeding Hudson's departure from Rome, Sir Robert and his family, "by dint of considerable exertion," were able to start for England, and "travelled by night over precipices and snow, eight nights out of twelve." Making what was considered "a most extraordinary rapid journey of twelve days only from Rome," he reached London on December 9th, when he immediately waited on the King and undertook to form a Ministry. Meantime both political parties had been in a state of intense excitement; the Whigs furious, the Tories triumphant, recriminations passing between them; the bitterest resentment felt on either side. On November 17th, His Majesty came to town to receive the resignations of his ministers who had been ordered to attend at St. James's and deliver their seals; while the Duke of Wellington and his partisans also assembled at the palace for the purpose of forming a privy council.

The latter remained in an outer room, the former congregating in the throne-room, "and it was amusing to watch them," writes the Clerk of the Council, "as they passed through the camp of their enemies, and to see their different greetings and bows; all interchanged some slight civility except Brougham, who stalked through looking as black as thunder and took no notice of anybody. The first question that arose

was—What was to be done about the prorogation? The duke thought they might as well finish that business to day, and I went on an embassy into the other room to propose it; but they declined to have anything to say to it, and evinced great anxiety to take no part in any proceedings of this day.”

His Majesty, who felt embarrassed by the presence of ministers whom he had turned out of office, gladly gave them leave to retire; and no sooner had they quitted the throne-room than it was entered by their jubilant successors, to whom the King announced that he had temporarily appointed the Duke of Wellington to five offices. His Grace’s occupation of these gave rise to the saying that, “The cabinet council sits in the Duke’s head, and the ministers are all of one mind.” When, however, Sir Robert Peel became premier, his Grace was satisfied to hold only one office; that of Foreign Secretary.

In the fond hope that a general election would strengthen his party, Sir Robert Peel dissolved Parliament on January 1st, 1835, when the country was once more plunged into a state of distraction. Whigs and Tories were equally confident of victory, and equally active in warfare. The great body of the people, seeing in the abrupt dismissal of the late Ministry, a conspiracy against the liberties which they believed would have been secured to them by the Whigs, were determined that the latter should have a majority in the House; while the Tories, filled with alarm and abhorrence at the advanced views of their

opponents, behaved with a recklessness and desperation unequalled in the history of electioneering.

As an example of the intentions and resolution of the Liberal party, a conversation may be quoted which that ardent Whig, Lord Duncannon, had with Charles Greville. On the latter asking what the Sovereign would do if, on summoning Lord Grey to form a Cabinet, it was found he was unwilling to propose such measures as his colleagues thought indispensable, "If he will not return, or won't go the length, he may send for Melbourne again ; but it is clear he—the King—must be prepared for a more Radical Government," came the answer. Greville thought His Majesty would never accept such a ministry or agree to the measures it would suggest. "Oh but he must, he can't help himself," replied Duncannon. "Well but my belief is that happen what may, he will not," persisted Greville. "Why, you don't think he will abdicate ?" came the query, to which Greville replied : "Yes, I do, rather than agree to certain things." "Well, but then he must abdicate," was Duncannon's remark. "Such is the language of the leaders of the other party," comments the Clerk of the Council, "and so calmly do they contemplate the possibility of such a consummation. The point on which all this turns is evidently the destruction of the House of Lords. The Whigs find it necessary to finish the work they began, and to destroy the last bulwark of Conservative power."

Those whose delight it was to discover dire omens

in ordinary events, whose pride it was to pose as prophets, saw and declared an ominous significance in the burning of the Houses of Parliament on the 16th of the previous October. It was believed that the fire was caused by the overheating of a stove in the House of Lords, in which an accumulation of old tallies were destroyed. It was at half-past six in the evening when, to use the language of the press, "the flames suddenly burst forth near the entrance of the two Houses, and immediately burnt with a fury almost unparalleled." Soldiers, police, and firemen were soon working with might and main to save this historic building; but it was soon realised that the House of Lords was doomed. From this, thousands of helpless gazers, packed in a dense immovable mass and sweltering in the fierce heat, saw the fire spread to the roof of the Commons, which at eight o'clock fell with such a mighty crash that it was believed an explosion of gunpowder had taken place. And as they watched the flames spring from the windows, flare triumphantly in the darkness, and scatter showers of sparks towards the lurid sky, one of them—remembering a proposal made the previous session by Joseph Hume, to build a more commodious House of Commons—shouted out: "There is Hume's motion carried without a division."

Westminster Hall was fortunately saved, but nothing remained of the House of Lords, the Painted chamber, robing- and committee-rooms, but a distressful sight of charred wood, twisted iron, and blackened stone. The

nation was relieved to know that the archives of both Houses were preserved, amongst them being the warrant for the execution of Charles I., signed by Cromwell and the parliamentary leaders of his time, that, after the Restoration of Charles II., had been found in the possession of an old lady in Berkshire, and had afforded the information necessary for the prosecution of the regicides. All lovers of art, however, regretted the irreparable loss of nine pieces of tapestry which had hung in the House of Lords, representing the attack and defeat of the Spanish Armada, woven by Francis Spiring, from designs by Henry Cornelius Vroom, a famous painter of Haarlem. Some time after the fire, the tenth of these tapestries, which was supposed to have been burned with the remainder of the set, was exhibited in the shop of an art dealer named Thorn, when the Commissioners of Woods and Forests ordered an enquiry to be made, as to how it had come into his possession.

It was then stated that years previously this piece of tapestry having been removed from its place on the wall to make room for a gallery, had been laid aside in one of the Lord Chamberlain's rooms. In course of time it was regarded as a piece of cumbersome rubbish by a servant, who to get rid of it, offered it as a present to a porter named Ware. The latter refused this priceless object as a gift, but bought it for five shillings and disposed of it for fifteen to a broker named Preston. The latter considered he had done a good stroke of business when in turn he sold

it for double that amount to Thorn, who after the fire offered it for sale, fixing the price at four hundred pounds. As none of his customers seemed anxious to secure the tapestry at this price, Thorn had the audacity to write to Lord Melbourne, suggesting that the Government should purchase its own property. As a result the Commission was appointed, which wonderful to relate, allowed Thorn's claim to his possession of this interesting relic.

On the destruction of the House of Lords, His Majesty at once offered the use of Buckingham Palace as a temporary home for parliament, but it was considered inconvenient for the purpose, and arrangements were made by which the Commons sat in an ante-room of the House of Lords, whilst the peers had to be content with a chamber which Greville describes as 'a wretched dog-hole.' It was in this House of Commons that for the first time a gallery was reserved for the reporters, which, says the Clerk of the Council, "is quite inconsistent with their standing orders, and the prohibition which still in form exists against publishing the debates. It is a sort of public and avowed homage to opinion, and a recognition of the right of the people to know through the medium of the press all that passes within those walls.'

The general elections resulted in a majority of one hundred and seven for the Whigs. The new parliament assembled on February 19th, 1835. The dawn was bright with sunshine; fleecy clouds and soft south winds gave a promise of spring; and that

inward exultation that corresponds with the outward renewal of virility, braced both parties for contest. This began immediately on the election of a Speaker: the Tories proposing Charles Manners Sutton, who had first been elected to the chair in 1817, when he had resigned his office of Judge Advocate General, and had since been six times re-elected Speaker. As a thorough Conservative, charged with having advised the dissolution of the late Ministry, and with having busied himself in the formation of the new, he was opposed by the Whigs who put forward as their candidate James Abercromby, formerly Chief Baron of the Exchequer of Scotland, and subsequently first Lord Dunfermline, a man whose imposing manner, knowledge of law, and long acquaintance with the House made him a formidable rival to Manners Sutton.

As the ultimate decision would be significant of party influence the election was regarded with the most exciting interest. For weeks little else was talked of by the town; newspapers seethed with controversy; the clubs rang with arguments; bets were taken, predictions made; and though both parties secretly realised the importance of victory, each in view of defeat, openly and falsely declared it would be of no consequence.

During the debates on the subject the Lower House was roused to an extraordinary pitch of passion; recriminations and taunts were flung backwards and forwards; anger chasing dignity to a mean flight;

and when, on a division being taken, the Whigs were found to have won by ten votes a scene of wild exulting clamour and bitter resentment followed. So dire were the fears entertained by the ministers regarding their continuance in office, that the Duke of Wellington bade his private secretary, Algernon Greville, to have everything ready to quit the Foreign Office at a moment's notice ; whilst at a dinner he and his colleagues attended, given by Lord Salisbury with the intention of celebrating an anticipated victory regarding the speakership, his grace "rejected all the commonplaces of consolation, 'that it would turn out a good thing,' and said at once it was as bad as could be ; and the thing appeared the worse because they had been led to feel so very secure."

Charles Manners Sutton was compensated for his defeat and disappointment when in the following March he was raised to the Upper House as Viscount Canterbury—his father being Archbishop of that see. In this way the defeated candidate's second wife—Ellen, widow of John Horne Purvis, and sister of the most gorgeous Lady Blessington—on whose union with whom he had for years neglected to invoke the blessing of the Church, became a peeress of the realm.

The King who in the first years of his reign had been carried away by the popularity his sympathy with reform had gained him, was now becoming alarmed at the liberal strides the Whigs were making which he feared he should, against his will, be forced to countenance. Depressed and weary, and probably

regretful of the peaceful days when he had lived as a simple country gentleman, he wept continually and declared he felt the crown tumbling from his head. Being assured by the members of his family that the Tories were the only ministers who could keep it there, he had expressed his determination to stand by them to the last. This expression of opinion was responsible for the coldness of his reception when on going to Parliament to deliver his speech on February 25th, 1835, he passed through dense and silent crowds, that stared at him sulkily without even removing their hats in salute. But if the Sovereign was received with chilliness, his ministers and the bishops were greeted with a storm of yells, hisses, and groans from which they were glad to escape without bodily injury.

As the Whigs believed the King had unjustly exercised his prerogative in dismissing his late Ministry, they resolved to retaliate by using every effort to turn his Government out of power, and to make their hostility felt whenever opportunity permitted. Therefore though His Majesty's speech from the throne had been cautiously framed so that no sentence might afford the opposition a chance of expressing resentment at the recent change, Lord Morpeth moved an amendment to the address, stating that His Majesty's Commons could not but lament that the progress of Reform should have been interrupted and endangered by the dissolution of a Parliament earnestly intent upon the vigorous prosecution of

measures to which the wishes of the people were most anxiously and justly directed. This was carried by a majority of seven votes.

A blow not less humiliating was given to the Government when the appointment of Lord Londonderry, as ambassador to St. Petersburg was questioned by the Commons. Charles William Stewart, third Marquis, and grandfather to the present holder of the title, was an aggressive Tory, whose position and wealth gave him great weight. The greater part of his immense fortune had been brought by his wife, the daughter of Sir Harry Vane Tempest and the Countess of Antrim, who had not only been a peeress in her own right, but heiress to great estates and valuable collieries in Ireland. Sir Harry, a patron of cock-fighting, fox-hunting, and horse-racing, had loved his wine so dearly that he could scarcely ever be induced to rise from the dinner-table before five in the morning. As a result he died when little over forty; whilst his widow the Countess of Antrim, having first consoled herself with a Mr. Phelps, a man of good voice and no family, quitted life's stage in the previous July (1834) leaving her possessions to her daughter, Lady Londonderry.

In August 1814 Lord Londonderry had been appointed Ambassador to Vienna, where later, among his other duties he collected evidence to be used in the divorce suit against Queen Caroline, which had helped to make him unpopular; whilst his opposition to the Reform Bill had so incensed the general

public that, as already stated, a mob in Hyde Park had endeavoured to drag him from his horse, and take summary vengeance on his obnoxious person. Therefore, when his appointment was mentioned in the House of Commons in March (1835) a storm burst from every side, and the most vehement attacks were made upon him. Sir Robert Peel, grave and firm, rose up to defend him, "speaking cleverly as usual," says Charles Greville, "but fighting under difficulties and dodging about, and shifting his ground with every mark of weakness. The result is that Londonderry cannot go, and must either resign or his nomination be cancelled. This is miserable weakness on the part of the Government, and an awkward position to be placed in. It is very questionable if the Duke of Wellington will not resign upon it, which would make another great embarrassment, for there is nobody to fill his place.

"It serves the Government right, and the duke especially, for having built up such a wall to run their heads against. They knew the loathing people had for the man, how odious and ridiculous he had made himself, how obnoxious and indefensible the appointment would be, and yet though there was no reason or occasion for it, and their circumstances were so difficult that the utmost caution and prudence were requisite in all their subordinate and collateral proceedings, as well as in the great and essential ones, they had the blind and obstinate folly to make this appointment. -It is not contempt of public opinion

in the duke, but it is that ignorance or indifference or disregard of it, which has been the besetting sin of his political life, and has so largely affected his political sayings and doings. Peel ought to have known better, and have taken a more correct view of his position, and the effect such an appointment would have on it. . . . It would be too mortifying if such a man should be the cause of the downfall of the Government, and all the evils that would result therefrom."

The paramount importance of whatever step might be taken was obvious to all. Should the Ministry persist in its appointment of Lord Londonderry, the Whigs were determined to oppose, censure, and countermand it; whilst if the Ministry cancelled it, they would seem in the eyes of all Europe to slight the Sovereign, whose nomination of ambassadors was then considered one of the royal prerogatives. Whilst high and low, Whig and Tory, hotly discussed the topic, the chief actor in the scene sought advice from Sir Robert Peel and the Dukes of Cumberland and Buckingham. The Premier declined to give his opinion; His Royal Highness counselled him to insist on his appointment; whilst his Grace of Buckingham also warmly urged him not to resign. For a while he wavered, irresolutely going to and fro, seeking the opinions of friends and colleagues, until at last on the 17th of March, he went to the House of Lords and resigned, stating at the same time, with a strange forgetfulness of what had recently

passed, "that he had no communication with the Government, nor had sought any advice, neither had any been tendered to him ; but he had come to his resolution after due deliberation as to the course he should pursue." The King was therefore obliged to accept the resignation forced from Lord Londonderry, but was sorely vexed and indignant at the support "given to the unconstitutional attack that had been made upon the appointment."

Close on the heels of this mortifying circumstance came the resignation of the Chancellorship of Ireland by Sir Edward Sugden, afterwards Lord St. Leonards, because his wife, with whom he had lived before their marriage, would not be received at the viceregal Court by Lady Haddington, wife of the viceroy. The latter had not gone over to Ireland until some weeks later than the Chancellor, and meantime Lady Sugden had been received in the society of the Irish capital, and all had gone well until the representatives of royalty reached the Castle. In the difficulty that then arose Lady Haddington applied to Queen Adelaide to know how she should act, and was told to do as she pleased, but that Lady Sugden would not be received at St. James's. On this hint the consultant acted, and the Castle gates were sternly closed to the Chancellor's wife. Great was the fury and indignation that followed ; and some embarrassment for royalty resulted when it was pointed out that Lady Canterbury, whose case was similar, had been presented and been received by Her Majesty.

A Government that had tottered from the first, fell on April 8th, 1835. Its irrecoverable failure greatly distressed and enraged the Sovereign, who was painfully humiliated at being obliged to summon to his councils the ministry he had abruptly dismissed a few months previously. However, with more command of himself than could have been expected from his impetuous temperament, he received them without evident embarrassment to himself and in a manner completely satisfactory to them; no difference being observable in his demeanour, even when he addressed the man amongst them whom he most disliked, Lord John Russell—generally spoken of as Johnny—who was now on the eve of his marriage with Theresa, widow of the second Lord Ribblesdale.

For the next week the town seethed with excitement. The King gave audiences at St. James's to the Whig politicians, and entrusted the formation of the ministry to Lord Melbourne; Brooks's club swarmed with politicians anxious to hear the latest news—if Lord Grey despite the wishes of his family would take office, if Daniel O'Connell, who held "the destiny of the Government in his hands and was acknowledged to be the greatest man going," would be in the cabinet, if the settlement of the troublesome Irish Church question would be undertaken immediately—whilst Lord Melbourne held daily councils, to which Lord Russell was summoned from Woburn where he was passing his honeymoon, and Lady Holland at the head of her over-crowded dinner-table

declared: "Now that we have gained our object I am not so glad as I thought I should be."

Besides all this, the town was furthermore interested by a dramatic episode arising out of politics. Before Parliament was adjourned to give time for the re-elections, Lord Alvanley, speaking in the Upper House, enquired of Lord Melbourne if the new Government had made a compact with "the Irish agitator" to support the ministry and strengthen its power. Resenting this, O'Connell attacked Lord Alvanley in the Commons, where with his happy talent for stinging nicknames, he referred to his lordship as "a bloated buffoon." This epithet was found intolerable, because it verged on truth; for Lord Alvanley whose person was as rotund as his manners were jocose, had the reputation of being the greatest wit and most noted *bon vivant* of his day. Above all things he prided himself on knowing how to live; as was shown by the fact that he insisted on having an apricot tart on his dinner table every day throughout the year; that on one occasion he paid Gunter two hundred guineas for a luncheon basket that sufficed a small boating-party going up the river; and that as one of a dozen men dining together at White's Club, who were each to produce his own dish, Alvanley's, as the most expensive, had won him the advantage of being entertained free of cost. This it may be added was gained at an expense of one hundred and eight pounds odd; that being the price of a simple fricassee comprised entirely of the *noix* or small pieces at each side of the

back taken from thirteen kinds of birds ; among them being a hundred snipe, forty woodcocks, twenty pheasants, in all about three hundred birds.

Few samples of his admired wit have been preserved to us, but among them his advice to Gunter ranks first ; for on one occasion when he had asked the pastry cook to hold a restive horse, the latter replied : "He's so hot, my lord, I can't hold him. What am I to do ?" when the answer came, "Ice him, Gunter ; ice him." One of his habits which may have been amusing to some, though a vexation and anxiety to those with whom he stayed, was that of reading in bed and then flinging the candle into the centre of the room ; when, if it continued alight, he flung pillows at it until extinguished. From these traits it will be seen that O'Connell's words had the quality of gall ; and whilst smarting from them their victim summoned a meeting at Brooks's to have the offender expelled from the club, and then sent him a message by Colonel Dawson Damer demanding an apology or satisfaction. An apology was refused and satisfaction denied ; for having in 1815, killed in a duel an antagonist named D'Esteer, set upon him with the intention of removing him from the troubled arena of politics, O'Connell, aghast at taking the life of a fellow-creature, publicly vowed he would never accept another challenge.

Lord Alvanley then announced his intention of inflicting public chastisement on the offender at the first opportunity, when O'Connell's eldest son Morgan offered to give the satisfaction which his father was

obliged by oath to decline. A meeting of Alvanley's friends was immediately held at Lord De Ros's house to consider the proposal. Lord Worcester and Tom Duncombe were against, and Colonel Damer and Lord De Ros for accepting it, when the principal person concerned gave the casting vote by saying that the boldest course was the best and he would fight. Colonel Damer was sent to make this decision known to Colonel Hodges, Morgan O'Connell's second, who suggested that the duel should take place next morning. "No ; immediately," said Damer, and ready consent was given.

Taking a surgeon with them, Alvanley and his friends set out in two hackney coaches from Arlington street for Chalk Farm, on whose breezy lonely fields they found Morgan O'Connell and Colonel Hodges awaiting them. Two other figures were seen in the distant background, black against a grey blue horizon, wide apart, and pursuing their separate and solitary ways, until suddenly attracted by this group, mysterious in its movements whilst preparing for expectant tragedy. Then impelled by the common feeling of curiosity, both rapidly drew near, when they revealed themselves to those they intruded on, as a Methodist parson and an Irish beggar woman. Both spoke according to the promptings of his and her spirit. The woman, forgetful that people usually pay to see an entertainment—the aspect in which the duel presented itself to her Hibernian mind—asked for money, and cheerfully promised to pray for the departed soul

of the donor ; whilst the mild man in black clothing, besought them to put away angry thoughts and forbear to kill each other. " Pray sir, go and mind your own affairs, for I have enough to do now to think of mine," said Alvanley. " Think of your immortal soul," pleaded the preacher. " Yes," came the rejoinder ; " but my body is now in the greatest danger."

Further pious implorations were interrupted by ungodly words and blood-thirsty seconds, paces were measured, and face to face the combatants exchanged two shots that flew wide of their mark, their only effect being the production of copious comments and prayers from the Irishwoman. The seconds then consulted and agreed to the exchange of shots for a third time ; hearing which Alvanley afterwards declared that in his heart he execrated Damer for having consented to it. Luckily no injury was done, and without any expression of regret or apology, the antagonists parted. Alvanley was so pleased at returning without injury that he paid his hackney coachman with a liberality that surprised him ; and on the man remarking it was more than his due for driving him that distance, Alvanley replied ; " It is not for carrying me there, my good fellow, but for bringing me back."

The general election that agitated the country in the spring of 1835, is memorable as having been skillfully utilised by Disraeli as a means of bringing himself into prominence, though not into parliament. Three years previously, in 1832, he had stood for High Wycombe in the Whig interest. As he was then un-

known save as a novelist, he had solicited letters of recommendation to the electors from such advanced liberals as Sir Francis Burdett and Daniel O'Connell. In complying with his wishes the Irish leader stated his conviction that the cause of Reform would gain a great advantage by the return of this candidate, who was ready to carry its measures into practical effect ; and added : " I should certainly express full reliance on his political and personal integrity, and it would give me the greatest pleasure to help in any way in procuring his return."

These words from O'Connell were considered so valuable by Disraeli, that he had them printed and posted on the dead walls of the town. Having by this means, as well as by letters to the local papers, prepared the electors of High Wycombe for his advent, this " Adonis of the sable cheek," as the *Bucks Gazette* terms him in describing what followed, on a blazing June day, drove into the town in an open carriage drawn by four horses, his wrists " adorned by cambric, his bosom with lace," his coat lined with pink silk, charms hanging from his neck, a blue band round his hat, rings glittering on the gloved hands which he raised to adjust his ringlets, or to waft kisses to the women who in open-mouthed amazement hung from the windows to watch him.

Having arrived at the Red Lion Hotel, he jumped on its portico, and harangued the bewildered rustics for an hour and a half, making, as he declared, many of them cry and driving all of them mad. His

opponents, however, thought the electors had sufficiently preserved their senses to vote against him and secure his defeat. In the autumn of the same year, 1832, he had stood once more for High Wycombe, but with a similar result.

However, defeat was unable to turn Disraeli from his ambitions and he was still determined to enter parliament, though he now became doubtful as to which party would prove most serviceable in obtaining his return. During the election of December 1834, Lord Lyndhurst, Chancellor of the Tory Government, called on Charles Greville "about getting young Disraeli into Parliament for Lynn." Speaking of this candidate, Greville says: "His political principles must, however, be in abeyance, for he said that Durham (Whig minister) was doing all he could to get him, by the offer of a seat and so forth; if, therefore, he is undecided and wavering he must be a mighty important personage. I don't think such a man will do, though just such as Lyndhurst would be connected with." Disraeli was soon to give proof, by word and deed, that he was veritably a mighty important personage.

On the formation of the new Government Lord Melbourne acted as First Lord of the Treasury; Lord Lansdowne as Lord President of the Council; Lord John Russell as Home Secretary; Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary; Lord Glenelg as Colonial Secretary; Sir John Cam Hobhouse—Byron's friend—was at the Board of Control; and Mr. Henry



After the picture by A. E. Chalon.]

BENJAMIN DISRAELI, AFTERWARDS THE EARL OF BEACONSFIELD, K.G.

[To face p. 355.]

Labouchere, the member for Taunton, was Master of the Mint. Mr. Labouchere, who became first Lord Taunton, uncle of the founder of *Truth*, had since 1826 sat in Parliament in the Whig interest, and been a Lord of the Admiralty under Lord Grey's Government. On his appointment as Master of the Mint it became necessary for him to offer himself for re-election, when going down to Taunton he was astonished to find an opponent in Benjamin Disraeli, who in his new character as a full blown Tory was supported by the recently established Carlton Club, a rival of the Reform Club, of which he had been a member until such time as he had received, from an inconsiderate secretary, a reminder that his fees and subscriptions remained unpaid, when he had resigned. Flashy in dress, exuberant in manner, daring in speech, Disraeli proved on the hustings at Taunton the truth of an assertion made in the *Morning Chronicle* that he had advantages over most people, "for he seems to have succeeded in persuading public men, of principles the most opposite, that he shared their opinions."

With that delightful sense of humour that found highest enjoyment in bewildering the stolid Saxon, he assured his hearers that, "if there be anything on which I pique myself, it is my consistency"; a statement received with a simple faith and approving rapture, that enabled him to write to his relatives: "As to Taunton itself, the enthusiasm of Wycombe is a miniature to it, and I believe in point of energy,

eloquence, and effect, I have far exceeded my former efforts." All these efforts did not save him from defeat, as he shrewdly foresaw from the first.

Though he had now been three times rejected as a parliamentary candidate he was still doggedly determined to succeed, and as a means towards that end he resolved to attract the attention of the nation, and to secure the applause of his newly adopted party, by boldly bringing himself into contact with and gaining the attention of the most prominent man, the most vituperative speaker of his time, Daniel O'Connell. In these days of tolerance it is impossible to convey an idea of the fear and detestation inspired by the Irish leader in the minds of the Tories, especially at this crisis when the Whigs were suspected and charged with opening their ranks to him. That he had formerly striven to help Disraeli in gaining the object of his ambition was a detail unworthy of consideration. He had served his turn and must now be made to serve it again, though in another way. Therefore, in speaking at Taunton, Disraeli accused the Melbourne Ministry of having "seized the bloody hand" of an incendiary and a traitor; and formed an alliance with one "whose policy was hostile to the preservation of the country and who threatens us with the dismemberment of the Empire, which cannot take place without a civil war."

No one was more surprised at the attack than O'Connell, who had not only recommended Disraeli to the electors of High Wycombe and invited him to

dinner, but had received from him through Mr. Ronayne, within a few weeks of this speech, expressions of the most extravagant admiration and messages of kind remembrance. Sure of his power O'Connell bided his time, and then with deliberate and stinging cruelty gave his assailant a public chastisement that brought him a notoriety he would gladly have evaded. Speaking at a meeting of the Trades Union at Dublin, O'Connell alluded to the many attacks made on him by English speakers, one of which delivered by Mr. Disraeli caused him a great deal of astonishment. "In the annals of political turpitude," he continued, "there is not anything deserving the name of blackguardism to equal that attack upon me." He then explained that although he was not personally acquainted with Disraeli at the time, the latter had got an introduction to him and wrote to say that as he was about to stand as a Reformer for the borough of Wycombe, where there were many voters who would be influenced by Mr. O'Connell's opinion, he would feel obliged by receiving a few lines recommending him as a Radical.

"His letter to me," said O'Connell, "was so distinct upon the subject, that I immediately complied with the request, and composed as good an epistle as I could in his behalf, and Mr. Disraeli thought this letter so valuable that he not only took the autograph, but had it printed and placarded. It was in fact the ground upon which he canvassed the borough. He was, however, defeated, but that was not my fault.

I did not demand gratitude from him, but I think if he had any feeling of his own he would conceive I had done him a civility at least, if not a service, which ought not to be repaid by atrocity of the foulest description. At Taunton this miscreant had the audacity to style me an incendiary. Why I was a greater incendiary in 1831 than I am at present, if ever I were one; and if I am he is doubly so for having employed me. Then he calls me a traitor—my answer to this is—he is a liar. He is a liar in action and in words. His life is a living lie. He is a disgrace to his species. What state of society must that be that would tolerate such a creature—having the audacity to come forward with one set of principles at one time and obtain political assistance by reason of those principles, and at another to profess diametrically the reverse? His life I say again is a living lie. He is the most degraded of his species and kind; and England is degraded in tolerating, or having upon the face of her society, a miscreant of his abominable, foul, and atrocious nature.”

Strong as this language was, stronger was still to come, to be repeated in scores of newspapers, to cause the ridicule and laughter of the world, and to rankle deep in the heart of the man whom it professed to describe. “His name shows he is by descent a Jew,” said O’Connell, as he steadied himself for the final blow. “There is a habit of underrating that great nation, the Jews. I have the happiness of being acquainted with some Jewish families in

London, and among them more accomplished ladies, or more humane, cordial, high-minded or better-educated gentlemen I have never met. It will not be supposed therefore, that when I speak of Disraeli as the descendant of a Jew, that I mean to tarnish him on that account. They were once the chosen people of God. There were miscreants amongst them, however, and it must have certainly been from one of those that Disraeli descended. He possesses just the qualities of the impenitent thief who died upon the cross, whose name I verily believe must have been Disraeli. For aught I know the present Disraeli is descended from him, and with the impression that he is, I now forgive the heir-at-law of the blasphemous thief who died upon the cross."

Friends and foes joined in the shout of laughter caused by this speech, which made its victim—sensitive as he was to ridicule—writhe and fume. To sit passive and silent under the lash, was to admit cowardice and court insult; an offer to fight a man who had vowed never to accept a challenge was the only means of showing spirit. Disraeli's display of resentment lost nothing in the way of notoriety when he placed himself in the hands of that supreme dandy, Count D'Orsay, whom he requested to act as his second. But "the glass of fashion," considering that a foreigner should not interfere in a political duel, intimated a desire that his dear friend should have another representative, who accordingly was found for him. O'Connell was then challenged to mortal

combat, but, as was anticipated, declined to fight on the plea that he was vowed to peace.

However as Morgan O'Connell had just exchanged shots with Lord Alvanley, Disraeli wrote to the ormer from Park Street, Grosvenor Square, saying : "As you have established yourself as the champion of your father, I have the honour to request your notice to a very scurrilous attack which your father has made upon my conduct and character.

"Had Mr. O'Connell according to the practice observed among gentlemen, appealed to me respecting the accuracy of the reported expressions before he indulged in offensive comment upon them, he would, if he can be influenced by a sense of justice, have felt that such comments were unnecessary. He has not thought fit to do so, and he leaves me no alternative but to request that you his son, will resume your vicarious duties of yielding satisfaction for the insults which your father has too long lavished with impunity upon his political opponents."

Replying to this on the same day that it was received, May 5th, Morgan O'Connell, after stating that Disraeli's letter gave him no information as to the alleged scurrilous attack which he had then heard of for the first time, continues : "I deny your right to call upon me in the present instance, and I am not answerable for what my father may say. I called on Lord Alvanley for satisfaction because I conceived he had purposely insulted my father by calling a meeting at Brooks's, for the purpose of

expelling him from the club, he being at the time in Ireland.

“When I deny your right to call upon me in the present instance, I also beg leave most unequivocally to deny your right to address any insulting letter to me, who am almost personally unknown to you, and unconscious of ever having given you the slightest offence.”

Still smarting from his whipping, Disraeli determined to have satisfaction, and on receiving the above he immediately addressed a letter to Morgan O’Connell, saying : “I shall take every opportunity of holding your father’s name up to public contempt, and I fervently pray that you or some of his blood may attempt to avenge the unextinguishable hatred with which I shall pursue his existence.” Speaking of this composition the *Morning Chronicle* was of opinion that “so gross, so vulgar, so impertinent, so cowardly an epistle never came from the hands of a literary coxcomb . . . an adventurer who twice brought himself to market, and returned with the halter about his neck, but no money for his owners.” But another example of his correspondence was soon given to the public, in a letter addressed to Daniel O’Connell through the columns of the *Times*, which the Irish leader had styled “the venal lady of Fleet Street.”

“Although you have long placed yourself out of the pale of civilisation,” began this communication, meant to draw blood, but certain to provoke laughter, “still I am one who will not be insulted even by a

Yahoo without chastising it." Then after complaining that O'Connell's criticisms had been made on a "hasty and garbled" newspaper report, and referring to the charges made against his change of politics, he continued: "I admire your scurrilous allusion to my origin. It is clear that the 'hereditary bondsman' has already forgotten the clank of his fetters. I know the tactics of your Church—it clamours for toleration, and it labours for supremacy. I see that you are quite prepared to persecute. With regard to your taunts as to my want of success in my election contests, permit me to remark that I have nothing to appeal to but the good sense of the people. No threatening skeletons canvassed for me. A death's head and cross bones were not blazoned on my banners. My pecuniary resources, too, were limited. I am not one of those public beggars that we see swarming with their obtrusive boxes in the chapels of your creed; nor am I in possession of a princely revenue arising from a starving race of fanatical slaves. Nevertheless I have a deep conviction that the hour is at hand when I shall be more successful, and take my place in that proud assembly of which Mr. O'Connell avows his wish to be no longer a member. I expect to be a representative of the people before the repeal of the Union. We shall meet at Philippi; and rest assured that, confident in a good cause, and in some energies which have been not altogether unimproved, I will seize the first opportunity of inflicting upon you a castigation, which will make you at the same time remember and repent

the insults that you have lavished upon Benjamin Disraeli."

On the day when this letter appeared in the *Times*, Disraeli waited in his rooms in Park Street, Grosvenor Square, for the challenge which he momentarily expected from Morgan O'Connell. Hours passed tediously bringing him no challenge, and when evening came he dressed himself with more than ordinary care ; when clad in velvet and fine linen, displaying chains and rings, lace ruffles and perfumed ringlets, he set out for the opera where he was seen between the acts, flitting from box to box, smiling and triumphant before the women whom his words caressed, whilst his eyes measured them, and his judgment appraised the degree of usefulness each might prove in forwarding his career.

Next day all suspense regarding the anticipated challenge was set at rest in a manner which he describes to his sister. "As I was lying in bed this morning," says he, "the police officers from Marylebone rushed into my chamber and took me into custody. I am now bound to keep the peace in five hundred sureties—a most unnecessary precaution, as if all the O'Connells were to challenge me, I could not think of meeting them now. The general effect is the thing, and that is that all men agree I have shown pluck."

The Whigs now seemed to rest secure in power and popularity, notwithstanding that their opponents used every effort to decry and that the Sovereign dreaded and detested them. His Majesty was indeed

much upset at being obliged to reinstate ministers whose liberality he believed would undermine the monarchy. Charles Greville heard from Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence in June 1835, that his father was in dreadfully low spirits, abhorred all his ministers, even those whom he used to like formerly, and that he hated Lord John Russell most of all. "When Adolphus told him that a dinner ought to be given for the Ascot races he said: 'You know I cannot give a dinner; I cannot give any dinners without inviting the ministers, and I would rather see the devil than any one of them in my house.' I asked him how he was with them in his inevitable official relations. He said that he had as little to do with them as he could, and bowed them out when he gave any of them audiences as soon as possible."

A few days later the Clerk of the Council had an opportunity of seeing for the first time, a meeting take place between the Sovereign and his ministers, which did not strike him as exhibiting any mutual affection. The audience took place at St. James's Palace, and was summoned to confirm formally the appointment as Governor of Jamaica of Sir Charles Grey, son of the former Premier. The scene which is recorded here to illustrate the relations of the Whig Ministers to the Monarch, had best be given in Charles Greville's words.

"After Sir Charles Grey was sworn, the King said to him, 'Stand up,' and up he stood. He then addressed him with great fluency and energy

nearly in these words: ‘Sir Charles Grey, you are about to proceed on one of the most important missions which ever left this country, and from your judgment, ability, and experience, I have no doubt that you will acquit yourself to my entire satisfaction; I desire you, however, to bear in mind that the colony to which you are about to proceed has not, like other British colonies, been peopled from the mother-country—that it is not an original possession of the crown, but that it was obtained by the sword. You will take care to assert those undoubted prerogatives which the crown there possesses, and which I am determined to enforce and maintain, and I charge you, by the oath which you have just taken, strenuously to assert those prerogatives, *of which persons who ought to have known better have dared even in my presence to deny the existence.*’ His speech was something longer than this, but the last words almost precisely the same. The silence was profound, and I was amused at the astonishment depicted on the faces of the ministers. I asked Lord Lansdowne and Lord Holland who it was that he alluded to. Neither knew.”

Others immediately suspected that the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, was referred to; and that minister enquiring of Sir Herbert Taylor, the King’s secretary, if the blow were meant for him, was confirmed in his opinion that it was. On this, according to Greville, Lord Melbourne “spoke to His Majesty on the subject, remonstrated, and said it was impossible to carry on the Government if he did such things.

He said that he was greatly irritated, and had acted under strong feelings in consequence of what Glenelg had said to him. Melbourne rejoined: 'Your Majesty must have mistaken Lord Glenelg.' 'Not at all,' said the King, and he then went into a dispute they had had about the old constitution of Canada—I forget what, but something the King asserted which Glenelg contradicted," when on reference to the Colonial office it proved that His Majesty was right. "This was awkward," continues Greville; "however, it ended in the King making a sort of apology and crying *peccavi* for the violence of his language, and this will probably be somewhat of a lesson to him, though it will not diminish the bitterness of his sentiments towards his ministers."

Greville expressed his astonishment that any minister could consent to remain in office after receiving such an insult, but was assured that all the ministers were "thoroughly aware of their position relatively to the King, and of his feelings towards them; but they had undertaken the task and were resolved under all circumstances to go through with it, and whatever he might say or do, they should not suffer themselves to be influenced or shaken. This is the truth; they do not look upon themselves as *his* ministers, and perhaps they cannot do otherwise as things now are. It is, however, a very melancholy and mischievous state of affairs, and does more to degrade the monarchy than anything that has ever occurred; to exhibit the King publicly to the world as a cypher, and something less

than a cypher, as an unsuccessful competitor in a political squabble, is to take from the crown all the dignity with which it is invested by that theoretical attitude of perfection that has been so conveniently ascribed to it.

“Both King and Ministers have been greatly to blame; the one for the egregious folly which made him rush into this sea of trouble and mortification without calculation or foresight; the other for the unrelenting severity with which they resolved to gratify their revenge and ambition, without considering that they could not punish him without degrading the throne of which he is the occupant, and that the principle involved in his impunity, was of more consequence in its great and permanent results than any success of them. But it would have required more virtue, self-denial, wisdom, and philosophy than falls to the lot of any public man individually in these days to have embraced all these considerations, and it would have been a miracle if a great mob of men calling themselves a party, could have been made to act under the influence of such moral restraints.

“The King’s present behaviour only makes matters worse. When he found himself compelled to take these people back, and to surrender himself a prisoner into their hands, he should have swallowed the bitter pill and digested it, and not kept rolling it in his mouth and making wry faces. He should have made a very bad business as tolerable as he could, by yielding himself with a good grace; and had he treated them

with that sort of courtesy which one gentleman may and ought to show to all those with whom he is unavoidably brought into contact, and which implies nothing as to feeling and inclination, he would have received from them that respect and attention which it would have been equally their interest and their desire to show. This would have rendered their relations mutually much more tolerable, a decent veil would have been thrown over all that was humiliating and painful, and the public service must have gained by the tacit compromise ; but extreme folly, great violence in those about the King, and hopes of emancipation secretly cherished, together with the intensity of his hatred of his ministers, have conspired to keep His Majesty in his present unwise, irksome, and degrading posture."

The King's dislike to his ministers extended to the officers of the Household appointed by them, whom according to Raikes, he treated with neglect, and avoided all communication with them except when necessary. Nor did he on all occasions succeed in stifling his personal feelings in public, towards those whose politics had become distasteful to him. In speaking of a levee held in the first week of August 1835, Charles Greville gives an instance of the Sovereign's irritable behaviour to one of his Lords of the Bedchamber, Lord Torrington.

"A card," says this authority, "was put into Torrington's hands of somebody who was presented, which he read. 'So and so, Deputy Governor.'

‘Deputy Governor?’ said the King, ‘Deputy Governor of what?’ ‘I cannot tell your Majesty,’ replied Torrington, ‘as it is not upon the card.’ ‘Hold your tongue, sir,’ said the King. ‘You had better go home and learn to read;’ and shortly after when some bishop presented an address against (I believe) the Irish Tithe Bill, and the King was going as usual to hand over the papers to the Lord in Waiting, he stopped and said to Lord Torrington, who advanced to take them, ‘No, Lord Torrington, these are not fit documents to be entrusted to your keeping.’ Torrington is a young man in a difficult position, or he ought to have resigned instantly and as publicly as the insult was offered. The King cannot bridle his temper, and lets slip no opportunity of showing his dislike, impotent as it is, of the people who surround him. He admits none but Tories into his private society; wherever he goes Tories accompany him; at Windsor Tories only are his guests. This provokes his ministers, but it necessarily makes them more indifferent to the cultivation of his favour, and accustoms them to consider themselves as the ministers of the House of Commons and not of the Crown.”

The bitterest, most hostile party feeling ran through all ranks from the Court downwards. On one side the Tories were regarded as a monstrous barrier against progress; on the other the Whigs were considered dangerous incendiaries, bent on the destruction of the constitution and the crown. The Commons, proud of its Liberal majority and not unwilling to seek contest

and prove its strength, came into crashing collision with the Lords over important questions—not the least of which was the Irish Tithe Bill—when rabid passions were let loose, and contemptuous invectives exchanged between them. The claims made by the Irish leader, jealous fears of Russia, the spread of Radical opinions all over the country, led many Tories to predict that they were witnessing the beginning of the end : and that the devastating evil could only be checked by the prompt downfall of the Whigs.

As, however, this hated Government showed no satisfactory signs of weakness, those who could mercifully save their country by stepping into power were in the depths of despair, when suddenly, swiftly, like the spread of flame through flax, a whisper swept through town, of a charge made against the prime minister, which if true, must fling him from office, and oust his party, whose binding strength he was. This whisper which grew loud and louder until it was heard in every club and drawing-room in London, stated that Lord Melbourne was about to be made the co-respondent in a divorce case which the Hon. George Norton was taking against his wife, whose reputation stood in more peril from the fact that the premier, in Michaelmas 1829, had been cited as co-respondent in a similar case that William Crosbie, fourth Baron Brandon, threatened to bring into Court, but which had been compromised and withdrawn.

CHAPTER II

The Three Graces at the Court of Queen Adelaide—
Their Father, Tom Sheridan—A Young Man about
Town—In Edinburgh—Love and Marriage—The
Honeymoon at Inveraray Castle—Monk Lewis in
his Dressing-gown—Tom endeavours to enter
Parliament—Burning of Drury Lane Theatre—
With Beau Brummel at the Gambling-table—
Tom Sheridan's Failing Health—Gets an Appoint-
ment in South Africa—His Widow returns to
England—Her Beautiful Daughters—Marriage of
Mrs. Blackwood, afterwards Lady Dufferin—
Caroline Sheridan becomes the Hon. Mrs. Norton
—Georgiana Sheridan marries Lord Seymour—
Description of the Wedding—The Sailor King
sends for Lady Seymour—The Sheridan Boys—
A Great Heiress—Sir Colquhoun Grant—Brinsley
Sheridan and Marcia Grant elope to Gretna Green
—Her Father's Fury—Lord Seymour fights a
Duel—Threatens an Action for Conspiracy—
George Norton—Colonel Grant becomes reconciled
to his Daughter

CHAPTER II

THE Hon. Mrs. Norton, who was now to gain such unenviable notoriety, was one of the three granddaughters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, author of the *School for Scandal*, who adorned the court of Queen Adelaide and, because of their supreme beauty, soon became known as the Graces.

Their father, commonly spoken of as Tom Sheridan, was the only son of the dramatist by his first wife Elizabeth Linley, one of the loveliest women and sweetest singers of her day. Their son had made his entrance into the world on March 17th, 1775, whilst the town was still laughing at the wit and ringing with the praises of his father's comedy, *The Rivals*, which had been produced just two months previously. The happiness of an ideal union which had been preceded by a wonderful romance, was increased by the birth of this boy, who from his cradle was idolised by his parents ; one of whom was not spared to see her "dear cub, her little rogue," grow into manhood ; for when Tom was in his seventeenth year, his mother, beloved by all, not less for her exquisite beauty than

for her sweetness, faded out of life, a victim to the cruel disease of consumption, which together with much of her physical charm he inherited from her.

Probably foreseeing and fearing his son's threatened fate, Richard Brinsley Sheridan's care of his son became so excessive as to make the injudicious laugh. When ten years old Tom was placed at a private school at Hatton, under the care of his father's old friend Dr. Parr, an excellent scholar, not the less lovable because of his eccentricities ; one of which led him to appear abroad in a striped dressing-gown, greasy from age, but possessing the compensation of comfort. His reputation as a teacher was great, and as he made a rule of educating but seven pupils at a time, a certain distinction was gained in becoming one of them. Tom, however, did not remain long under his care, for his father, who was not only indebted to his Celtic temperament for his genius, but also for his profound belief in the dread factors that surround and shape our lives and vouchsafe warnings and foresights in symbols, portents, and visions, dreamt that Tom fell from an apple tree in the school grounds and was killed ; when starting from a harassed sleep he sent post haste for the boy, who knew Hatton no more.

He then decided that his son should be educated by a private tutor, and as far as possible under his own supervision. A man fitted for such a task was sought, when William Smyth, the son of a Liverpool banker, and a fellow of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, was

recommended by his friend Edward Morris, the author of a successful farce and a comedy. But Sheridan would not engage any man as mentor to his son without seeing and gauging him, and accordingly Smyth was asked down to the dramatist's country house at Isleworth, which had once been the residence of David Garrick. Smyth was immediately struck by the modesty of his host's manner, which he was obliging enough to think "very remarkable and indeed very good taste in one so celebrated."

A dinner of boiled chicken washed down with claret, was eaten in an oak panelled room glowing with the brightness of wax lights, which at this time—whilst suffering from nervousness and depression, the result of his recent loss and grief—Sheridan desired should fill every apartment he entered after sunset. In the process of the meal he talked about all subjects save that which he had summoned his guest to discuss. And it was only as the latter lay in bed thinking over their conversation, he remembered as he tells us, that whilst he learned little or nothing of his host, the latter had thoroughly sounded him. The result followed later when he was engaged at the handsome salary of three hundred a year to take charge of Tom, whom he describes as a fine youth with a sallow complexion, dark hair, a quick intelligent expression, and a lively manner.

Smyth then took up his residence with his pupil at Isleworth and afterwards at Wanstead and Bognor, and as an instance of Sheridan's solicitude for his son,

recalls that during one of the dramatist's visits to them in the winter, he expressed fear lest Tom might meet with an accident on the ice, and as a favour begged that the tutor would prevent his pupil from skating. Smyth explained that the ice was strong enough to bear a waggon, and that as a precaution he kept a servant with a rope and ladder on the bank whilst they skated, with which the anxious father seemed satisfied. He left that evening for London, but as Smyth was going to bed he heard a violent ring at the gate and was told that he was wanted. When hurrying down there sure enough, he writes, "what should I see glaring through the bars and outshining the lamps of the carriage, what but the fine eyes of Sheridan. 'Now do not laugh at me, Smyth,' he said ; 'but I cannot rest or think about anything but that damned ice and this skating, and you must promise me that there shall be no more of it.'" Submission was necessary ; but the tutor who could not have included lessons on filial respect amongst his instructions, told Tom : "Never was there such a nonsensical person as this father of yours."

Accompanied by this tutor Tom went to Cambridge, where he learned little but made a host of friends. His father had married in 1795 for a second time, his selection falling on a Miss Ogle, daughter of the Dean of Winchester, who has been described by Fanny Burney as a man of facetious pleasantry and real sagacity, "though mingled with eccentricities, perversities, and dreadful republican principles."

The bride, who was twenty-two years younger than her husband, had it was said, at first sight conceived a prejudice against him, to which she had given expression by bidding him "Go away, you nasty man"; the nastiness probably consisting of those evidences of drink upon a face that had once been comely. Arousing those powers of fascination which no woman and few men could resist, Sheridan soon won her admiration and affection. Her dowry of five thousand pounds was settled on herself, enhanced by a substantial sum from him. Nine months after marriage she gave birth to a son christened Charles Brinsley; but her love for her own child did not prevent her from being devoted to Tom and eager to guard and serve his interests through life.

On leaving the University the latter became a young man about town; when graceful in person, remarkably good looking, high spirited, quick at repartee, a maker of verses, with a good ear for music, a sweet voice, and a rare charm of manner, he was eagerly welcomed into that circle of wits and courtiers, politicians and place-seekers, extravagant dandies, gamblers, high livers and hard drinkers which surrounded the Regent. The army being considered the most suitable profession for a young man of his parts, a commission was obtained for him, when he became aide-de-camp to his father's old friend Lord Moira, then residing at Edinburgh as Commander of the Forces in Scotland, and expecting to be appointed Viceroy of Ireland. Here, where his own light was undimmed by that of his more brilliant

father, Tom Sheridan shone in all his glory. All that was choicest, most vivacious in the Scotch capital gathered round him to be amused by his droll stories, the verses he composed extempore, the songs he sung with such incomparable expression and unflagging spirit. A good dancer, boxer, and drinker, he was at every rout, the life and soul of each, welcomed at all.

Whilst still in Scotland, Tom Sheridan fell violently in love with a young girl, remarkable for her beauty and subsequently distinguished for her talent, Miss Caroline Henrietta Callander, a daughter of Colonel Callander of Ardkinglas, who had married Lady Elizabeth M'Donnell, daughter of the fifth Earl of Antrim. Tom Sheridan's handsome presence, and lovable nature, soon won their way with the girl of his choice, and their wedding took place in November 1805, when he had just turned his thirtieth year. It may be mentioned here that the bride's sister Fanny soon after married Sir James Graham of Netherby, from whom are descended the Countess of Feversham and her beautiful daughters—Lady Helen Vincent, Lady Cynthia Graham, the late Duchess of Leinster, Lady Ulrica Duncombe—as well as the Duchess of Montrose, Viscount Grimston, and the late Lady Houghton.

Part of Tom Sheridan's honeymoon was spent at Inveraray Castle, where among other guests of the Duke of Argyle staying there at the time, was a young man, Matthew George Lewis, who at the age of twenty and whilst he was an attaché to the British Embassy

at The Hague, had written a novel called "The Monk." The indecencies of this romance of sliding panels, superabundant gore, and ghastly dungeons had the double effect of causing the Society for the Prevention of Vice to apply for an injunction to suppress its sale, and of opening to its author—henceforth known as "Monk Lewis"—the doors of the highest and most exclusive society in the kingdom. Small and boyish in stature, he is described by Sir Walter Scott, as having "queerish eyes, that projected like those of some insects, and were flattish on the orbit." As this poor little man "had always dukes and duchesses in his mouth, and was pathetically fond of any one that had a title," he generously sought to share his delight at his surroundings with his mother in the letters he wrote to her. In one of these, dated from Inveraray Castle, he tells her that many of the guests never went to bed before five or six in the morning, whilst they generally elected to play billiards between four and five.

"The other morning," says he, "I happened to wake at six o'clock, and hearing the billiard balls in motion, I put on my dressing-gown and went into the gallery, from whence looking down into the great hall, I discerned Tom Sheridan and Mr. Chester (who had not been in bed all night) playing with great eagerness. Fortunately Tom was in the act of making a stroke on which the fate of the whole game depended, when I shouted to him over the balustrade: 'Shame, shame, a married man,' on which he started back in a fright, missed his stroke and lost

the game." A record of Tom Sheridan's remarks would have been interesting ; but perhaps the prayers put up to the spirit of virtuous indignation wrapped in a dressing-gown, were too fervent for repetition by a polite letter-writer.

By this time the financial affairs of Richard Brinsley Sheridan had become hopelessly entangled, and his gaiety eclipsed by the spirit of vexation, from which he was never more to be delivered during the remainder of his life. To this sad state had this man of genius been brought by "sins of omission, senseless credulity, destructive procrastination, unworthy indolence, all abetted by one vile habit, somewhat perhaps to be palliated by an original infirmity of constitution (an occasional and unaccountable dejection of spirits without a cause, and a constant inability to sleep), but never to be excused" ; as he confesses to his wife in a letter printed by Mr. Fraser Rae in his admirable biography of Sheridan.

As he was no longer able to afford his son an allowance suitable to his position in the Army, Tom resigned his commission and returned to London, with the intention of helping his father in the management of Drury Lane Theatre, and if possible of finding a place in Parliament. Believing that there would be little difficulty in having his ambition to become a legislator gratified, Tom said to his father one night whilst both were supping with the vivacious and hospitable Irish composer, Michael Kelly, "I think that many men who are called great patriots in the

House of Commons, are great humbugs. For my part if I get into Parliament, I will pledge myself to no party, but write upon my forehead in legible characters ‘To be let.’ ” “Do so, my dear boy, and under that, write—‘Unfurnished,’ ” said his father. This was one of those replies which are made on the spur of the moment for sake of their wit at the expense of their appropriateness ; for the elder Sheridan held a high estimate of his son’s abilities, and could give hearty expression to his admiration as will presently be seen.

In the hope of getting him returned to Westminster, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who had throughout his life kept free from personal favours, “beyond perhaps any case that has existed under the circumstances in which I have struggled through the world ” ; and who when in the greatest distress had refused an offer from his friend the Prince of Wales, now incurred a heavy obligation to His Royal Highness, who expended some eight thousand pounds in thrice endeavouring to get Tom into Parliament. These efforts were unsuccessful, though the candidate worked hard at the various hustings, and by his ready wit, the ridicule of his opponents, his quick replies to the mob, caused his distinguished sire to say in an outburst of admiration : “Let me only be known to posterity as the father of Tom Sheridan.”

The year after his marriage Tom obtained a place in the Recruiting Department at a salary of four hundred a year ; and about the same time his father

assigned him a quarter share in Drury Lane Theatre. But his receipts from the latter source were uncertain, and his income proved insufficient for the expenses of his increasing family. Writing in November 1808 to Richard Peake, the treasurer of the national playhouse, he professes himself grievously disappointed at not receiving certain sums he expected, which would have discharged the weekly bills of his house in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square.

The evil fortune which had already brought gnawing anxiety to his father and himself, dealt them a heavier blow when on February 24th, 1809, Drury Lane Theatre was burnt to ashes. Whilst the angry glow of its flames filled the sky as with threatened wrath, and reflected itself in lurid splendour on the walls of the House of Commons, hasty news was brought there to Richard Brinsley Sheridan of the destruction of his property ; when, instead of hurrying to the scene, with marvellous and perhaps despairing calmness he kept his seat, and in reply to Lord Temple's proposal that the debate on the war with Spain should be adjourned, declared that "whatever might be the extent of the individual calamity, he did not consider it of a nature to interrupt their proceedings on so great a national question."

Though steps were taken to erect a new theatre on the old site, yet innumerable vexations caused by impatient creditors, jealous trustees, impecunious shareholders, and a whole swarm of those connected with the stage, plagued both father and son. Through all Tom

looked forward to the new play-house becoming, as he wrote, "an independence for my children, if not for myself." In the last four words he touched on the tragic certainty of his fate; for not only himself but those who loved him saw that the disease inherited from his mother was swiftly and surely sapping his strength. The cares and anxieties he now suffered, helped to quicken the falling sands of his life; though through all he strove to keep a brave front and maintain the joyous spirit for which he had become famed; and it was only to a sympathetic friend, like the young Scotch poet, Walter Scott, that he complained at this time "on the fatigue of supporting the character of an agreeable companion."

Whilst his father was eager to provide for "poor Tom, and my grandchicks," and his stepmother declared herself willing "to make any sacrifice in the world and to live in any way whatever" that some provision might be made for him and his family, yet money was not forthcoming, and its need occasionally made itself bitterly felt. "If you can possibly, send me ten or twenty pounds," he wrote to Richard Peake, the treasurer of the theatre; "I have not been master of a guinea since I came to town, and wherever I turn myself I am disgraced. To my father it is vain to apply. He is mad, and so shall I be if I don't hear from you."

It was in the hope of winning money that he so urgently needed and found so difficult to gain, that he entered Watiers club one evening and seated himself

at the Macao table where play was high. Here he was found by Tom Raikes, a man about town, an elegant dandy, a schoolfellow and friend of Beau Brummel. Tom Sheridan, he says, never played high, but having dined freely had dropped into the club in the hopes of winning fortune by staking a few pounds which he could ill afford to lose. Seated round a green baize table littered by cards, sat a group of young men whose flushed, eager, or haggard faces were seen by the pale light of wax candles as they bent forward intent on the game. A round oath or a sudden laugh broke the silence that suspense had claimed, and marked the gain or losses of the players. The chink of guineas that passed from reluctant hands, the popping of wine corks, the rattle of dice on distant tables, added to the general noise which was at its height when Beau Brummel, dressed with an elegance that without challenging attention compelled admiration, entered the club of which he was perpetual president. Seeing the eager harassed expression of his friend Tom Sheridan, he stepped up and asked him to yield him his place and go shares with him in the game, requests that were willingly acceded to. The Beau whose luck at cards was phenomenal, at once put down a sum ten times larger than Tom was about to stake, and his usual good fortune attending him, in ten minutes he had won fifteen hundred pounds. He then rose, divided the money, and giving Tom his share bade him go home to his wife and children, and never touch cards again.

But though bitterly feeling the need of means befitting men of their generous temperaments and extravagant tastes, both the Sheridans were sufficiently Bohemian to make their necessities an object of jest. "Money I must have," said Tom, in desperation to his father. "Then," replied the latter with equal gravity, "take that pair of pistols and mount your horse. The night is dark, and Hounslow Heath is not far off." Without moving a muscle Tom told him: "I tried that and unluckily stopped your treasurer Peake, who said that you had been beforehand with me, and robbed him of every shilling."

His health waned with the decline of his fortune, and so ill was he in 1810 that he was sent for a while to Spain. Such benefit as followed was merely temporary, for two years later he writes to tell his friend Richard Peake that he will soon sail for Madeira, he being very unwell. Before starting he wished to leave nothing unsettled. "I, of course, shall like to shake your fist before I go, and so will Caroline," he adds. Instead of sailing for Madeira he went to Ireland, from whence he wrote to his step-mother, that he could neither walk, nor ride at a foot pace, from the oppression instantly brought on his breathing.

In the following year the Duke of York, who showed a friendly interest in the Sheridan family, found a place for Tom as Colonial Treasurer at the Cape of Good Hope, whose climate it was thought would check his disease. Though this post was an

insignificant offering to the son of a man who had been of signal service to his party, yet the certainty of its salary of twelve hundred a year must have been of immense relief to Tom who was at this time the father of seven children. The inevitable shadow that attends the brightest of human circumstances, lay in the knowledge that his days in the land were few. When congratulated by Angelo, his former fencing master, the kindly, dark-eyed Italian who had taken him in his bright boyhood for treats to the pastry-cook, Tom with a sad smile said : "Ah, my old friend, I shall have but twenty months to live."

Hopeful as he always was, the elder Sheridan could not conceal from himself the dark fate that awaited his eldest and best beloved son. In writing to his wife, he says of Tom : "It would half break your heart to see how he is changed. I spend all the time with him I can, as he seems to wish it, but he so reminds me of his mother, and his feeble, gasping way of speaking affects and deprives me of all hope. He tries to suppress the irritability of his temper, in a very amiable way, which makes me fear he thinks ill of himself."

Before leaving, Tom was sent for by the Prince Regent, who had always acted with kindness towards him, and who now in bidding him good-bye gave him a handsome present. The wife whose devotion and affection were Tom's greatest comfort, sailed with him for the Cape in the autumn of 1813, accompanied by their eldest daughter, the other children, the youngest

of whom was little more than an infant, being left in the care of relatives. Arrived in South Africa the warmth of the climate, the more cheerful circumstances in which he found himself, his new surroundings, all stimulated him ; and though each morning he woke to the knowledge of the brevity of his life, his joyous temperament asserted itself and triumphed above craven fears. As usual he won the friendship of all who knew him, and was as gay and social as his health permitted. But slowly and inevitably the end drew nearer. In an undated letter written by Richard Brinsley Sheridan to his wife, and printed for the first time by Mr. Fraser Rae, we find the following sad sentences :—

“I have endeavoured to escape from despairing about Tom as long as my sanguine heart could hold a hope. But now, and you must think so too, all hope is over. It is a heavy stroke and the long postponing of it led to a habit of irrational confidence on the subject, for his malady seemed to have become a part of his constitution and unable to conquer life. If you were well I would go to him, though the scene would crack what nerves I have left. I try to reserve a ray of hope for thee, my son, for observe what Caroline says of ‘his spirits being still excellent,’ and that in all events, is a blessed circumstance.” In a postscript the writer adds that he has had a long interview with General Gordon who had just returned from the Cape, and concludes with the heart-rending wail, “Oh, sad, sad. What shall I do?”

The writer himself was now drawing towards his last days. Broken in spirit by endless contentions with the creditors at whose hands he had been arrested, and suffering from an abscess in his throat and varicose veins, his undermined constitution gave way. But after much pain, ineffable peace came at the last, and on July 7th, 1816, he passed out of a world that had held some few triumphs and many trials for him. Though his old friend the Prince Regent, whom he had been censured for championing, did not write to express his sympathy with Tom, that kindly act was performed by the Duke of York, who regretted the loss of so gifted and endearing a man.

The son, who must have bitterly regretted a death which accumulative calamities had made welcome, did not long survive this event; as he died on September 12th, 1817. As soon as possible his widow and daughter returned to England, when apartments were given her at Hampton Court Palace by the Prince Regent, who was anxious to assist the family. Living quietly here on the small pension to which she was entitled on her husband's death, Mrs. Sheridan not only contrived to pay his debts, but to educate her three daughters and four sons. As they grew up, all of them were tall, handsome and stately. The beautiful sisters differed from each other in their types of loveliness, for whilst the eldest, Helen, afterwards Lady Dufferin, was remarkable for the exceeding grace of her figure, the poise of her head on her incomparable shoulders, the vivacity of her

face, whose fascination was increased by the slight irregularity of its features; the second daughter, Caroline, who became the Hon. Mrs. Norton, was more imposing, her olive complexion, the classic outline of her countenance, and the flashing, dark eyes inherited from her famous grandfather, giving her a superb and commanding loveliness; while the third daughter Georgiana, subsequently Duchess of Somerset, was beyond all women of her day the most bewitching; her dazzling, fair complexion, her clear cut and perfect features, her large violet eyes, dark brows, and black hair combining to give her resplendent beauty. All three had inherited the brilliant conversational power, wit, and literary talent, which were the birthright of their gifted family.

The expected happened when each was sought in marriage at an early age. Helen Sheridan, born in 1807, was just seventeen when she met Pierce Blackwood, then a Commander in the Navy, who fell desperately in love with this charming girl and asked her to become his wife. The descendant of a Scottish family who had settled in Ulster in the reign of Elizabeth, and whose head had been raised to the peerage as Baron Dufferin and Clandeboye, Helen Sheridan's suitor was heir-presumptive to the family title and estates; but as his father, and his father's eldest brother were then living, he had little to depend on save his pay. Though her beauty and talents might have won this young girl a more eligible marriage, it was approved of by Mrs. Sheridan who

was anxious to see her large and portionless family provided for, and was celebrated at St. George's Church, Hanover Square, on July 4th, 1825. On the same day the bride and bridegroom started for Italy, and took up their residence in the Via Maggio, Florence, where in June 1826 she gave birth to her only child, the future Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, who from that hour until her last became the joy and pride of her life.

After spending two years abroad, Captain and Mrs. Blackwood with their boy, known to his family circle as Ghigo, returned to England and lived for a while in a pretty little cottage at Thames Ditton, selected for its vicinity to Hampton Court Palace. It was whilst at Thames Ditton, as the late Lord Dufferin mentions in his sketch of Lady Dufferin, prefixed to her poems, that he celebrated his mother's coming of age, by nearly poisoning himself with some laburnum seeds. "It is not every son," he says, "that can remember his mother's twenty-first birthday; but my own discomfort and my mother's subsequent reproaches for having disturbed the serenity of so august a celebration impressed the date upon my memory."

Before this date Caroline Sheridan, born in 1808, had received a proposal of marriage. Clever from her earliest years, with a marked individuality and a love of independence, she had as soon almost as she could write, begun to scribble verses which had been the wonder and admiration of an uncritical nursery

audience, but the disdain of a Philistine governess, who would summarily have deposed a muse that usurped the place of practical knowledge. Pens and ink were therefore denied the poetess and fiction forbidden her. This autocratic rule, however, roused rebellion, and the rhymes were produced, attended by the delight which secrecy lends to the forbidden; so that before the age of twelve had been reached by her or by her sister Helen, who was also developing her gift of versification, they had jointly produced two little books of verses, illustrated by pen and ink sketches named, "The Dandies' Rout," and "The Travelled Dandies." Encouraged by publication Caroline Sheridan, before reaching her seventeenth birthday, had written a long poem, called "The Sorrows of Rosalie," which, though not published until some years later, marked her as a writer destined for distinction.

That the fates were concerned in her at this period of her life, is shown by the fact that she produced a poem and received an offer of marriage simultaneously. The man who desired to make her his wife was George Chapple Norton, brother and heir-presumptive of the third Lord Grantley, and grandson of the first Baron Grantley, who as Sir Fletcher Norton had been Speaker of the House of Commons for many years. The suitor, who had just been called to the Bar, had no prospects beyond the limited income of a younger brother; no talents that promised to raise him; but whilst devoid of a healthy reliance on

himself had that exaggerated sense of his abilities that so often accompanies incompetence.

His offer of marriage was made at a time when he had scarcely exchanged six sentences with Caroline Sheridan, acquaintance with her having been made when she visited Lord Grantley's house with her governess; that individual, as the agent's sister, having the privilege of taking her pupils to see the gardens whenever she pleased. At such time the children were joined by George Norton and his sister, the latter "an eccentric person, who affected masculine habits, played a little on the violin," and showed much interest in the handsome, olive-complexioned girl with the flashing eyes, superb air, and vivacious manner, who could write delightful verses and recite them with a dramatic feeling that would have ensured her fame and fortune on the stage. At the close of a summer day enjoyably spent in the Grantley gardens, Caroline was told that these visits must end, at least until such time as her mother was consulted, as George Norton had declared his intention of asking permission to marry her. This news, communicated by the governess, was verified a few days later when he waited on Mrs. Sheridan to whom he was almost unknown, and made his proposal in due form. He was then told that Caroline was still too young for marriage, which must not be thought of for at least three years. As that period was considered overlong to wait for the interest and advancement which he hoped a connection with this family

would bring him, he requested Mrs. Sheridan to use her influence with her late husband's friend the Duke of York, to obtain him some appointment.

During the ensuing three years Caroline Sheridan—as she narrates in the autobiographical details she supplied to the *Gem*—fell in love with another man, whose early death brought her disappointment and grief. The time of probation being over, she again received a proposal from George Norton, who at a date when the scions of nobility were not sufficiently enterprising and adventurous to cross the Atlantic in search of richly dowered wives, contented himself with seeking a bride whose family connections might be relied on to secure him a well paid appointment. On his solemnly assuring Mrs. Sheridan that his own and his sister's portion amounted to thirty thousand pounds, she permitted his marriage to her second daughter, which took place on June 30th, 1827.

The third and most beautiful of Dick Sheridan's granddaughters, Georgiana, was destined to make a brilliant alliance. Carefully educated, like all the members of her family, she devoted a fair share of the leisure she could afford from the study of Latin, French, Italian, music, and drawing, to writing long letters to her eldest brother, Brinsley, then in the service of the East India Company. Permission to quote from this correspondence, which contains some interesting accounts of her early life, has been granted to the writer by her son, the Duke of Somerset.

In one of these letters, dated January 1829, she speaks of a children's ball, given by the Duke of Clarence to Donna Maria da Gloria, then in her tenth year, who as already stated, on the abdication of her father, Don Pedro, had succeeded to the throne in May 22nd, 1826. This child had been warmly welcomed to England by George IV. and his royal brothers, and had made friends with the Princess Victoria, her junior by a few weeks, who was also destined to become a sovereign.

The Duke of Clarence's ball was held at his residence at Bushey, and attended by a vast crowd of young people, excited and curious, with tireless limbs, inexhaustible appetites, and eyes that bravely defied their customary sleep. The boys, Georgiana Sheridan writes, were in white ducks with light-green jackets, and had their hair curled. Charley, her young brother, wore a magnificent worked collar to his shirt. "Caroline and I had gold and green wreaths with scarlet berries in our hair, and I had a red velvet body, a 'Maria Stuart,' which is the fashion now, and white satin skirt. Even little Ghigo, your nephew, though only two years and a half old, went; the Duke would have him. He was dressed in a crimson velvet frock frilled all round and a Grecian lace tucker, and his hair curled by Caroline. He looked too beautiful. The ball began at half past six o'clock, as it was to be over at twelve o'clock, because the little Queen might not stay up late. The room was so crowded I could not get up to the top where the

little Queen was dancing, so I did not see her the whole night ; but Charley was her *vis-à-vis* once, and Frank danced next her twice. Mamma saw her and says, although ten years old she looked fourteen. She was dressed like a grown-up woman in a pink gauze gown, with her hair turned up and flowers in it."

In May 1830 she had more surprising and interesting news to tell her brother. "Your Georgy is going to be turned into a chaperone," she writes, "Lord Seymour, the Duke of Somerset's son, asked me yesterday to marry him, and I being very civil and polite said : 'Yes.' Joking apart I am going to marry him. He is very clever and good. The Duke, his father, has no objection and is very kind indeed. So are his sisters ; but my acquaintances are rabid and frantic at my daring to do such a thing, and they turn round, after first congratulating mamma and say : 'Good heavens, is Lord Seymour mad ? What a fool.' With other pleasing intimations of their good wishes towards me."

Lord Seymour, who was born in 1804, was the eldest son of the eleventh Duke of Somerset, who had married a daughter of the ninth Duke of Hamilton. From boyhood he showed an intelligent mind that delighted in getting verbal information which he had not the patience to seek in books. Frank in disposition, excessively kind-hearted and amiable, he was a favourite with all his relatives. His education was begun at Eton, continued at Christchurch, and

finished by a visit to the Continent, which was extended to Russia, a country not usually included in the grand tour. With its well-formed nose, firm mouth, wide forehead, and large eyes, his face expressed that strength and nobility which marked his life, made him the best of husbands, the most estimable of men, and as Mrs. Blackwood said, "the kindest and dearest brother-in-law that ever was invented."

Anxious to gain his handsome bride, their marriage took place within a month of their engagement, and was celebrated June 10th, 1830, in her uncle's, Sir James Graham's, house in Grosvenor Place. "Georgia married on Thursday evening," wrote Mrs. Blackwood, "and a very merry wedding it was, only rather patriarchal, as the shy bridegroom induced her to beg there might be no one present but the members of the respective families. Ghigo assisted at the ceremony with his hair curled, and was excessively admired. Georgia was dressed in plain white satin, with no ornaments but a diamond brooch and earrings, beautiful blonde seduisantes, and a magnificent blonde veil thrown over her head, so large that it nearly reached her feet; she was to have worn a tiara of diamonds and emeralds on her forehead which her husband gave her, but unfortunately it was not finished in time.

"I think I never saw anything so perfectly beautiful as she looked, and she was in excellent spirits. The dinner which was given by Uncle Graham on the occasion, consisted only of the duke and his two

sons, my mother and we three daughters, husbands, etc., and my uncles and aunts and the clergyman. After dinner the rooms were lighted up, the back drawing-room arranged as a chapel for the occasion. Georgia put on her veil, and as soon as the gentlemen came up from dinner, they were married and immediately set off for Wimbledon Park, his place which is only five miles out of town.

"Then the fun commenced for us who were not shy, as the company began to arrive, and a very pleasant party we had of about two hundred people. Caroline and I were dressed alike, in white satin and pearl ornaments. Both my brothers were there of course, and we made really a gorgeous spectacle, being all so handsome, you know."

The first part of the honeymoon was spent at Wimbledon Park, formerly one of the residences of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, who left it to her grandson Jack Spencer, from whose descendant it had been bought by the Duke of Somerset. Whilst the young couple were still here news reached that George IV. had died on June 26th; and before leaving Wimbledon the bride drove over to Bushey to pay a congratulatory visit to Amelia, the youngest of the new monarch's children. Whilst quietly sitting with her a servant came to say the King wished to see Lady Seymour. "So down I went in great tribulation," she writes, "for I was not in proper mourning for the late King, and if the Queen was there, should be obliged to kneel and kiss her hand; but, however, he

alone was standing with some Fitzclarences and some other people before the front door of his house ready to ride with the Queen. He received me kindly, kissed me, and seemed in great spirits and quite delighted at hearing himself addressed as His Majesty."

From Wimbledon the bride and bridegroom went to Berry Pomeroy, in Devonshire, another country house belonging to the Duke of Somerset, some distance from the town of Okehampton, for which Lord Seymour stood and was returned to Parliament. After a visit to Bradley Martin they returned to town, when the Duke of Somerset, described by his daughter-in-law as "the kindest old man in the world," bought a house for them at 18, Spring Gardens, where they became neighbours of Mrs. Norton, who then lived at Storey's Gate, close to St. James's Park.

The youngest of the Sheridan boys, "poor little Tommy" who became a midshipman, was killed by a fall from the foretop of *H. M. S. Diamond*, then in the harbour of Rio de Janeiro; he being in his fifteenth year at the time; another brother, Charles, died of consumption whilst acting as a Secretary to the Embassy at Paris; whilst a third, Frank, fell a victim to the same disease whilst serving as Treasurer to the Government in the Mauritius. The eldest Brinsley, who had been sent to India where he was employed in the East India Company Service, returned to England soon after the marriage of Lady Seymour. Over six feet in height, singularly handsome and with much of the brilliancy of his race, he soon became

a favourite in social life, and was lucky enough to win the affection of Miss Marcia Maria Grant, who had a fortune of some forty thousand pounds in her own right, besides being the heiress and only surviving child of her father, Lieutenant General Sir Colquhoun Grant, of Frampton Court, Dorsetshire.

A man of fine presence, fiery temper, and indomitable courage, General Grant had proved himself one of the most dashing hussars in the Army, had commanded a brigade at Waterloo, where he had several horses shot under him, and had exhibited a bravery that won him the highest distinction. Devoted to the only child left to his declining years, proud of her beauty and hopeful of the rank she was entitled to win, it was inconceivable that he would consent to her marriage with a penniless young man without prospects, no matter what his personal attractions or how ardent his affection for her. Though despairing of winning his approval, the lovers continually saw each other, chiefly at the houses of Brinsley Sheridan's sisters, who naturally were not averse to their brother gaining so desirable a bride. Eventually, at a time when it was possible she might be forced to select one of her numerous and more eligible suitors, the young couple agreed to elope to Gretna Green, where marriage was still made easy.

An opportunity to put this resolution into practice, was given them in the middle of May 1835, when Sir Colquhoun Grant went to contest the borough of Poole against the Hon. George Byng, his

opponent for parliamentary honours. No sooner had General Grant left town, strung to the high humour of an electioneering fight, than Mrs. Norton called for Miss Grant and drove her to Lady Seymour's, where an extemporary wardrobe having been provided for her, she and her lover set out for Scotland, fast as a coach and six horses could carry them. As she did not return to her home during the day, an alarm was raised by the servants, when her father's close friend, Sir Robert McFarlane, called to make enquiries of Lady Seymour, who refused him all information.

On the blithe May morning of the following day as Sir Colquhoun, primed for victory was starting from the little hotel at Poole to canvas the electors, he was astonished to see galloping wildly up the street, a chaise in which his butler and housekeeper were seated. Catching sight of him they halted, and in confused sentences told him of his daughter's elopement. For the moment blind fury overcame this man of imperious temper and lordly will ; but needing action and thirsting for revenge, he had fresh horses put to the chaise and began his furious journey to town. All attempts at recovering the heiress were useless ; for at five o'clock on the morning of May 17th, 1835, at Gretna Hall, Marcia Maria Grant and Brinsley Sheridan were made man and wife.

General Grant was unwilling to submit to this occurrence calmly, and at first felt inclined to take an action for conspiracy in carrying off his daughter, against those who had aided and abetted that scheme ;

but eventually he consented to deal with men instead of women and sent his second, Captain Rose, to summon Lord Seymour to a duel ; on which the latter desired to have an interview with his challenger, that he might remove from his mind certain erroneous impressions regarding Lady Seymour's share in the elopement. Captain Rose declined to grant this meeting, and declared that unless Lord Seymour could state that Miss Grant did not elope from his house, and that he was not present when Sir Robert McFarlane asked for information as to her flight, General Grant's opinion could not be altered.

Lord Seymour then selected as his second Mr. Cavendish Bentinck, who, calling on Captain Rose, repeated his principal's wish that Lady Seymour's name should not be brought into the affair, in which he said she had been in no way concerned ; stating at the same time Lord Seymour's perfect willingness to meet Sir Colquhoun Grant immediately, and to give him such satisfaction as he might require for any share he supposed him to have in the matter. Captain Rose replied that if his lordship had no previous knowledge of the elopement he would endeavour to change General Grant's determination ; but this he was told was out of the question, as Lord Seymour did know of it an hour before it took place.

All attempts at a peaceful settlement failing, the duel took place at Hampstead, then a lonely spot. Here at an early hour in the morning, the principals,

their seconds, and a surgeon, five figures in all, crossed the dewy fields in silence. Paces were measured, places were taken, the combatants stood face to face and fired. The first change of shots having no effect, General Grant, still unappeased, desired that the pistols should be reloaded ; but before this was done Mr. Bentinck asked Captain Rose if he considered that Lord Seymour had given Sir Colquhoun sufficient satisfaction, and on being told that he had, it was stated that Lord Seymour was then ready to explain various circumstances regarding the elopement which would probably alter the General's opinion about it. The duel then ended, all leaving the ground together. Sir Colquhoun next summoned Norton to a duel ; but the latter being unwilling to risk his life, managed to pacify the irate father, who soon afterwards became reconciled to his daughter's marriage ; and in dying on the 20th of the following December at the age of seventy-two, left her his estates ; when she and her husband entered on a long and happy life.

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CHAPTER III

An Ill-mated Pair—Mrs. Norton's Poems—Earning an Income by her Pen—Writes to the Ministers—Lord Melbourne and Richard Brinsley Sheridan—The Home Secretary first sees Mrs. Norton—Results of their Meeting—Lord Melbourne and Disraeli—George Norton obtains an Appointment as Police Magistrate—Domestic Disputes—Mrs. Norton flies from her Home—Her Husband's Repentance—Fresh Disagreements—The Invitation to Frampton Court—Norton sends his Children away—Pursuit by their Mother—Indignities suffered by a Wife—Watching for Sight of her Boys—Lord Melbourne spends Easter with his Sister, Lady Cowper, at Panshanger—Description of Lord Cowper's Family—A Vindictive Calumny—Lord Melbourne advises Mrs. Norton—The most ill-conditioned Creature possible—You can count upon Me

CHAPTER III

AN unusually brief experience of married life, served to show Mrs. Norton the sad mistake she had made in the selection of a husband. A man without ability, of indolent habits, violent temper, paltry, selfish, and weak, he was no mate for a woman of masculine intellect and high spirit, full of ambition, loving independence and scorning meanness, who to her various talents added that one which seldom tends towards domestic happiness, repartee, whose sarcasm flashed with the sharpness and danger of a sword.

On their return from a honeymoon, when lightning flashes of temper hinted at threatened storms, George Norton lodged his young and beautiful wife in the chambers he had occupied in his bachelor days at Garden Court in the Temple; from whence they presently moved to a small house at Storey's Gate. In this year, 1827, he received a small appointment as Commissioner of Bankruptcy, but dissatisfied with this, as with all other things, he continually assured his wife that, as she had brought him no fortune—her dowry not being payable until her mother's death—she was

bound to use every effort to obtain for him a profitable post from the political friends of her grandfather. Whilst endeavouring to gain this for him, she also turned her literary talents to profit, and in 1830 published "The Sorrows of Rosalie," written some years before, and "The Undying One"; poems that were widely and favourably received, and whose merits were summed up by Hartley Coleridge in his statement that they had much of the intense personal passion by which Byron's poetry was distinguished from the larger grasp and deeper communion with men and nature as shown by Wordsworth, and that they likewise had "Byron's beautiful intervals of tenderness, his strong practical thought, and his forceful expression."

Encouraged by approval, and stimulated by the possibility of making an income, she now wrote newspaper and magazine articles, words for songs, and prose and verse for the fashionable annuals of the day; one of which, *The Keepsake*, she edited; the proceeds of all going to support her home and defray her husband's personal expenses. In the course of time she became the mother of three children; Fletcher, born in July 1829; Thomas Brinsley, born in November 1831; and William who came into the world two years later. Motherhood however did not bring her domestic happiness; for always dissatisfied, jealous of the talents that helped to support him, and frequently violent, her husband led her a life of misery into whose sordid details it is unnecessary to enter, save to say that her wretchedness was increased by the interference of a

wealthy and rampant female, a certain Miss Vaughan, a connection of his own, to whose judgments and wishes—because of the benefits he expected from her—Norton insisted that his wife should submit.

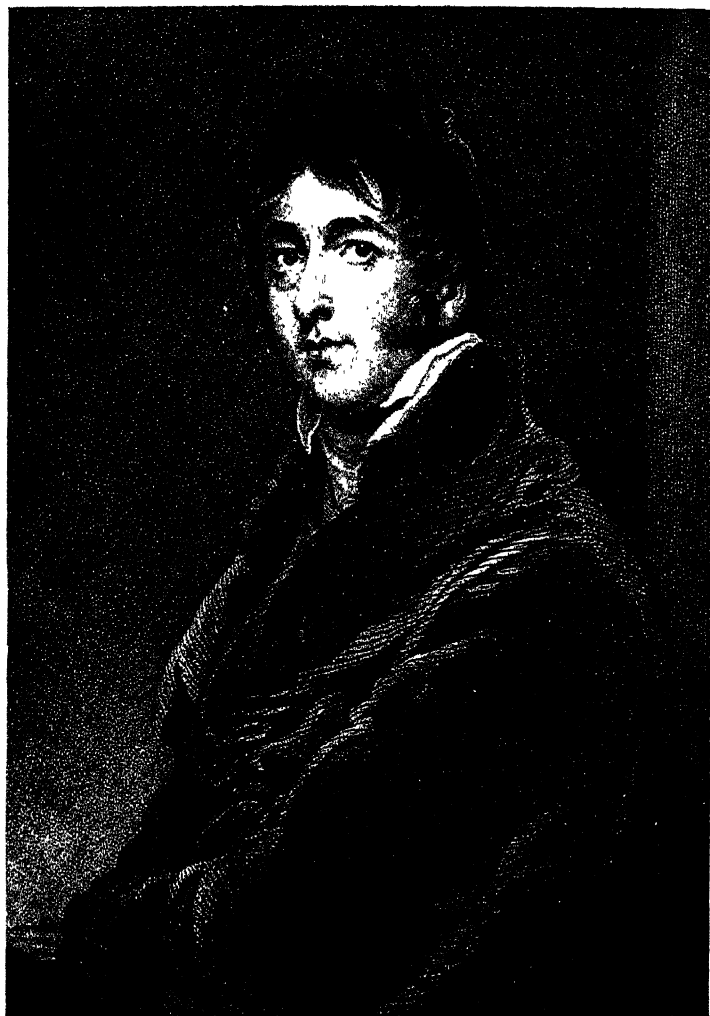
Speaking of this trying time, Mrs. Norton, writing some years later, said : “I worked hard and was proud of my success. I brought to my many tasks all the energy which youth, high spirits, ambition, good health, and the triumph of usefulness could inspire, joined to a wish for literary fame so eager that I sometimes look back and wonder if I was punished for it by inevitable and additional notoriety. I rejoiced then at finding—woman though I was—a career in which I could earn that which my husband’s profession had never brought him. Out of our stormy quarrels I arose, undiscouraged, and worked again to help him and forward the interests of my children. I have sat up all night, even at times when I have had a young infant to nurse, to finish tasks for some publisher, and made in one year the sum of fourteen hundred pounds by my pen, and I have a letter from Mr. Norton’s own brother, proving that even when we were on terms of estrangement, I still provided without grudging, money that was to be spent on his pleasures.”

In 1830, when the Bankruptcy Court was constructed, Norton’s post was abolished and he was left without even nominal employment, when believing himself wronged, he urged his wife to clamour for some appointment for him from the Whigs, who had

then come into power. Obedient to his wishes she literally besieged, as she writes, the various members of the Government to whose principles her distinguished grandfather had been a devoted, but ill-requited adherent ; but the passage of years had dimmed their memories, and her petitions for one who had no personal claims for employment remained for some time unanswered.

Among those to whom she wrote on behalf of her husband, was Lord Melbourne, then Home Secretary. As a young man he had intimately known and highly esteemed her grandfather, for whose play, *Pizarro*, he had written an epilogue ; and when the great dramatist was carried to his grave in Westminster Abbey, where it was his ambition to lie, William Lamb had been among the vast crowd, composed of the noblest in rank and talent, that had sorrowfully accompanied Sheridan to his resting place. Later on it was the young statesman's intention to write a biography of this ill-fated genius ; for which purpose he prepared himself by a course of reading and the collection of facts ; and only abandoned his purpose on learning that Tom Moore was about to undertake such a work. He therefore handed all his notes to the poet ; an act he deeply regretted when on the publication of Moore's "Life of Sheridan" it was found singularly unsatisfactory by the relatives and friends of the dramatist.

In the pressure of political business, Mrs. Norton's appeal on behalf of her husband received no reply



From an engraving after the painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A.]

WILLIAM LAMB, SECOND VISCOUNT MELBOURNE.

[To face p. 409.

from Lord Melbourne, until one day fate leading him past her house at Storey's Gate, it suddenly occurred to him to answer her letter in person. On calling he was immediately admitted when for the first time he met his correspondent, then in her twenty-third year, a woman of surpassing beauty, of fascinating manners, and distinguished talents. As a lover of wit and humour, wide-eyed to woman's loveliness, he was much impressed by his hostess in whom it pleased him to recognise many of her famous grandfather's characteristics, together with a charm wholly her own. Nor could she have been otherwise than delighted with one whom Leslie the painter describes as being "the finest specimen of manly beauty in the meridian of life" he had ever seen; for "not only were his features eminently handsome, but his expression was in the highest degree intellectual; his laugh was frequent, and the most joyous possible, and his voice so deep and musical that to hear him say the most ordinary things was a pleasure."

As a result of this meeting each felt for the other that inexplicable sympathy which occasionally binds in friendship at first sight those who were strangers but an hour before: and when leaving, Lord Melbourne promised to use his influence on her husband's behalf, and to accept the warm invitation given him to call again. His word was kept in both cases, for this fine scholar, who delighted in literary society, became a frequent guest at her house; whilst George Norton was appointed to the first vacancy that occurred in

the Divisional Magistracy of London ; a post whose salary was a thousand a year, and whose duty merely entailed attendance three days in the week to hear causes tried in the simplest form of the law.

Among the circle of distinguished men and women whom Lord Melbourne met in Mrs. Norton's drawing-room none interested him more than Benjamin Disraeli, whose fantastic appearance and boundless ambition appealed to the Home Secretary's sense of humour. Their first meeting took place at a dinner party given by Mrs. Norton to celebrate the birthday of her eldest brother Brinsley, who, says Disraeli in describing it, "she says is the only respectable one of the family, and that is because he has a liver complaint." Besides, Lord Melbourne, the guests included Mrs. Norton's younger brother Frank, her Uncle Charles, and her sister Mrs. Blackwood, "also very handsome and very Sheridanic." The latter told Disraeli "she was nothing. You see Georgy's the beauty, and Carry's the wit, and I ought to be the good one, but then I am not." "I must say," continues Disraeli, "I liked her exceedingly ; besides she knows all my works by heart, and spouts whole pages of 'Vivian Grey,' 'Contarini Fleming,' and 'The Young Duke.' In the evening came the beauty, Lady Seymour, and anything so splendid I never gazed upon. Even the handsomest family in the world, which I think the Sheridans are, all looked dull. Clusters of the darkest hair, the most brilliant complexion, a contour of face perfectly ideal. In the evening Mrs. Norton sang and acted

and did everything that was delightful. Old Mrs. Sheridan—who by the bye is young and pretty, and authoress of ‘Carwell’—is my greatest admirer, in fact the whole family have a very proper idea of my merits, and I like them all.”

Anxious to impress the Home Secretary, who might prove useful in forwarding a career whose heights were beyond the view of the commonplace and the sane, Disraeli in the course of the dinner turned the conversation on the scene of his recent travels. When, to sustain the conversation, Lord Melbourne made some remarks about the East, a land he had never seen, but of which he had read much, Disraeli, thinking it more effective to dissent than to agree, airily remarked: “Your lordship seems to have derived your notions from the ‘Arabian Nights’;” on which the good-humoured minister replied: “And a devilish good place to get them from.”

Later in the evening Disraeli seized the opportunity of speaking to Lord Melbourne of his intentions of entering Parliament—he being at this period undecided which party would best serve his interests—and aired in flowing language his ardent hopes, when the Home Secretary said: “Will you tell me what you want to be?” Then, without a smile of interpretation on his sphinx-like face, Disraeli declared he looked forward to the premiership. “And I wish you may get it,” laughed Melbourne in reply.

On being made a magistrate in April 1831, George Norton, according to Lord Melbourne’s biographer,

Macullagh Torrens, "professed himself grateful, and did not disguise that he was hopeful of greater benefits to come. He was ever warm in the welcome of his patron, and obsequious in deference to each passing whim—only one thing he could not do, attend punctually at his court." Not only in regard to his laziness, but in other matters, he soon became a source of trouble to the man who had appointed him. On one occasion, when he had quarrelled with a colleague and was eager to air his opinions in the columns of the *Times* on the privileges of the magistracy, Lord Melbourne had the utmost difficulty in preventing him. "I was much alarmed at the notion of his doing this," the minister writes to Mrs. Norton on July 19th, 1831, "especially as I found him thoroughly impressed with the opinion that he could do it with the greatest cleverness and dexterity. I hate the magistrates writing to the newspapers; besides people will be sure to say to me, if the magistrates get squabbling in public, why do you not clear the bench of these fellows altogether? They tell me also that Norton does not go to his office early enough.

"I should be annoyed at having a complaint made on this subject. Pray dissuade him, gently, from any public exhibitions in the newspapers; and urge him quietly to a little more activity in the morning. He might surely without difficulty get there by twelve o'clock in the morning. This," he concludes, "is a disagreeable lecturing letter, but still upon matters to which it is necessary to pay some attention."

Later on Norton made himself still more troublesome to his patron ; for on a vacancy occurring in the Whitechapel Bench, he seemed to consider that he had a right to fill the appointment, and in this way to gain a considerable pecuniary advantage, as it was afterwards discovered. That he gave general dissatisfaction to all connected with him on the bench, and that he had no ability to fill a more important post, did not prevent a man of his domineering and self-assertive nature from urging his wife to request Lord Melbourne to nominate him to a higher and more lucrative appointment. When Norton's wishes were obeyed, the minister not only expressed his unwillingness to grant such a request, but declared his regret at having already given a position to a man so unworthy of it. Undeterred from asking further favours from one who held him in such contempt, Norton said that if the minister could not find him another post he might at least lend him fifteen hundred pounds. His request for this sum was immediately declined, because, as Lord Melbourne explained to Mrs. Norton, "he doubted whether in reality it would be a loan." Disappointed at not being able to borrow money from his patron, Norton next applied to his wife's trustee for his consent to raise a portion of the trust fund and to place the principal at his disposal, but again met with a stern refusal. As a result he vented his disappointment on her, when fresh quarrels arose between them.

Flinging an ink bottle at her head, setting fire to

her manuscripts, placing a hot kettle on her hand, were brutalities she had borne from her husband for sake of the children who were dear to her ; and it was only when in an after-dinner mood, he broke open the door of the room into which she had locked herself for protection and flung her downstairs, that she appealed to her eldest brother, Brinsley, to interfere on her behalf. The latter immediately sent word to Norton that if he had not a written apology and promise of amendment from him, he would expose him. In reply the offender excused himself by saying he had broken open the door "on principle, thinking it necessary as a husband to resist such extravagant and disrespectful proceedings" as locking him out of any room in the house. At the same time he wrote the required apologies and asked his wife to forgive him.

His words of repentance and promises of reform were soon forgotten, and a few weeks later their domestic troubles came to a climax when he seized her by the throat, apparently with the intention of strangling her. On making her escape she fled from his house and took refuge with her sister Lady Seymour, close by. On recovering his senses Norton repented of his ruffianism, and wrote to his wife begging that she would come back to him. On this her eldest brother sent a friend to arrange the conditions of the proposed return and reduce them to writing, saying that it was impossible for her family to allow her any longer to submit to such treatment

as she had already met with from the man who should have guarded and protected her. All the required promises of improvement were readily given by Norton, who declared he was ready to make any sacrifices provided his wife would return to her home, and expressed his regret and submission to her family.

In writing to her he declared himself glad that they had avenged her and scorned him, and that no words could express his remorse. "As there is a God above us who will judge our actions," he continued, "I think I have a right to ask you to trust to me for the future. If I cannot make you happy, let us then quietly and rationally separate, I declaring to the world that the cause of it was not any imputation on you. I go on my knees to you. Have pity, have compassion on me. You shall never repent of this; you shall not, you shall not."

Touched by such expressions of affection, and desiring reunion with her children, she would have returned at once, had she not been dissuaded from such a step by her family, who knowing Norton by this time, despaired of her ever finding peace with him. Miserable and undecided, she then turned for counsel to Lord Melbourne, knowing that there were few men more capable of giving sage and friendly advice than he. In replying to her letter he immediately came to the point by saying, "If for the sake of your children you think you can endure to return to him, you certainly will act most wisely and prudently for yourself in doing so." He suggested, however, that

she should take no step without consulting her brother-in-law, Lord Seymour, or her uncle, Sir James Graham ; and he added : “ Keep up your spirits, agitate yourself as little as possible, do not be too anxious about rumours and the opinion of the world ; being as you are, innocent and in the right you will in the end bring everything round.”

Acting on this counsel she went back to her home and her husband. “ I believed then that he really repented, and grieved to lose me,” she wrote. “ I am convinced now that it was part of a scheme ; of a determination at least that if we were to part, he would make me rue the day on my own account.” All that followed led her to this belief ; for before she had been two days in the house, the conditions agreed to were broken. Agitation, misery, and the premature birth of a child, darkened her days and weakened her health, and before the month of August 1835 ended her brother Brinsley was once more entreated to come between her and her husband’s brutality.

In September Norton left town for Scotland, and on his return after some weeks, spent the greater part of his time in the company of Miss Vaughan. His own home was made wretched by his irritating stupidities and violent tempers. Nor was Lord Melbourne free from the worries wrought by this troublesome fool ; for it was at this time, that on the retirement of one of his colleagues he attempted to appoint another in his place, with some profit to himself. Writing from Downing Street, January 27th,

1836, Lord Melbourne says: "Norton plagues me to death about the successor to Walker. He seems to think that he and H. have almost a right to make the appointment. He has just brought me a letter strongly recommending a Mr.—, and seemed to to be struck as with a new idea, when I told him that he had better let me mention the name to Lord John as from myself; inasmuch as he and H. interfering would rather be against the candidate than for him. He seems to think that everything is to give way to the consideration of giving him a pleasant companion. He says, the Bench used, with Walker, to be like a pleasant club, and that he must have an agreeable fellow to walk to and fro with. Now do try to stop him, nor give him any notion of what I have said."

In the Spring following the date of this letter, it was arranged that Mrs. Norton and her children were to spend the Easter holidays at her brother's country house at Frampton Court, Dorsetshire, where the Seymours and other members of the family were likewise to assemble. When agreeing to this visit of his wife and boys, Norton expressed a hope that she might be able to have him included in her brother's invitation; but this proved beyond her power, for Brinsley Sheridan not only disliked and despised his brother-in-law, but in common with the male members of his family scarcely acknowledged his acquaintance at this time.

On the day previous to her intended journey, Mrs. Norton returned from a drive to hear that Miss

Vaughan had called in her absence and had remained closeted for some time with Norton, who on entering the drawing-room, his wife found talking to Lord Melbourne. Conversation dealing with general topics passed between the three ; but when the minister left, Norton began to complain angrily that she was unable to get him either an appointment or money. From this he went on to talk of her brother's refusal to invite him to Frampton, adding that Miss Vaughan told him he ought not to allow his children to visit a home where he was not welcome. To this his wife replied that it was due to his own conduct he was not on friendly terms with her family ; that the doctors had ordered change of air for her eldest boy who was recovering from scarlatina ; and that she would give her servants orders to refuse admittance in future to Miss Vaughan who was always striving to create mischief.

Making her exit with this statement, Mrs. Norton hurried to dress for a dinner given by Lady Fox, a daughter of William IV., whilst Norton went to dine with the chief magistrate, Sir Frederick Roe. Husband and wife met later on at a party given by Lord Harrington, and returned home together, when their dispute was resumed regarding the visit to her brother's. This ended by Norton angrily exclaiming : " Well the children shall not go, that I have determined," and as he entered the house he ordered the servant to unpack the carriage which was ready for starting next morning, and to take the children's belongings out,

as they were not leaving home. Going up to the nursery he repeated the same to their nurse, who on appealing to her mistress was told that Mr. Norton's orders must be obeyed.

Though in despair at the disappointment of all her projects for a few peaceful and happy weeks spent with the boys, who were her best beloved in all the world, Mrs. Norton made no complaint, but waited until early morning when she went to consult Lady Seymour as to what should be done. She was still talking over possible plans to change her husband's intention, when her manservant came to say that "something was going wrong at home"; that the children and their traps had been put into a hackney coach and driven no one knew where. Distracted at this news Mrs. Norton rushed home to find Miss Vaughan had taken away her boys. To follow them to her house was the step which immediately suggested itself and was carried out by their frantic mother. As a result she was not only denied a sight of her sons, but her reception by Miss Vaughan was bitterly hostile.

Writing of this painful incident long afterwards Mrs. Norton says: "Anything like the bitter insolence of this woman—who thought she had baffled and conquered me for life—I never experienced. She gave vent to the most violent and indecent answers to my reproaches, and said that if I troubled her further, she would give me into the hands of the police. I left her and went alone to my brother's house in the country. I wished him to return immediately to

town with me ; and so far from having intended, previous to this outrage, to leave my home, or having made any preparation whatever for such an event, I left everything that belonged to me, even my wearing apparel in Mr. Norton's house ; and he who afterwards advertised me as a runaway, thought it so probable that I should reappear next day with my brother, that he gave this order to the manservant, dated the morning after my departure.

"In case Mrs. Norton or her brother should return to town, and call at Storey's Gate, this is my written authority to you, to refuse admittance, and to open the house door only with the chain across."

The gross indignities she suffered as a wife were lost sight of in the burning desire she felt as a mother to recover her children, the loss of whom, as their father knew, would prove her greatest misery ; and fearing lest she might engage in some desperate plan for regaining them, Norton had them removed to his brother's place at Wonersh, near Guildford. This did not prevent their mother, who hungered for sight of her boys, from following them, not with the intention of capturing them but that when opportunity offered she might surreptitiously see and speak to them. "I only saw them by stratagem," she wrote to a friend, "by getting up very early and remaining on the watch near the house till they went out for their morning walk. My eldest, who is seven years old, gave me a little crumpled letter which he said he had had in

his pocket a fortnight, directed to me, but that none of the servants would put it in the post. He was so dear and intelligent, and listened so attentively to all I said to him, that it was a great though a melancholy satisfaction to have had this interview. I know he will never forget me."

Mrs. Norton then went to her brother's place at Frampton Court, from whence she wrote to Lord Melbourne, who was passing the Easter holidays with his sister Lady Cowper and her family at Panshanger, in Hertfordshire ; a passing glimpse of which is given by Charles Greville, who was an occasional visitor there. "The people of this house," he wrote, "are examples of the religion of the fashionable world, and the charity of natural benevolence, which the world has not spoiled. Lady Cowper and her family go to church, but scandalise the congregation by always arriving half an hour too late. The hour matters not ; if it began at nine, or ten, or twelve, or one, it would be the same thing ; they are never ready and always late, but they go. Lord Cowper never goes at all ; but he employs multitudes of labourers, and is ready to sanction any and every measure which can contribute to the comfort and happiness of the peasantry. Lady Cowper and her daughters inspect personally the cottages and condition of the poor. They visit, enquire, and give ; they distribute flannel, medicines, money, and they talk to and are kind to them, so that the result is a perpetual stream flowing from a real fountain of benevolence, which waters all the country round, and gladdens

the hearts of the peasantry, and attaches them to those from whom it emanates."

The few quiet days which the premier was snatching from the warfare of politics was disturbed by hearing that Norton was spreading broadcast a report that his wife had eloped from him ; news which she hastened to assure Lord Melbourne was a vindictive calumny. In replying to her on April 6th, 1836, he says : " I hardly know what to write to you, or what comfort to offer. You know as well as I do, that the best course is to keep yourself tranquil, and not to give way to the feelings of passions, which Heaven knows are too natural to be easily resisted. This conduct upon his part seems perfectly unaccountable ; and depend upon it, being as you are, in the right, it will be made ultimately to appear, whatever temporary misrepresentations may prevail. You cannot have better or more affectionate advisers than you have with you upon the spot, who are well acquainted with the circumstances of the case, and with the characters of those with whom they have to deal. You know that I have always counselled you to bear everything, and remain to the last. I thought it for the best. I am afraid it is no longer possible. Open breaches of this kind are always to be lamented ; but you have the consolation that you have done your utmost to stave this extremity off as long as possible. In all difficulties you may always depend upon me, and believe me,

" Yours,

" MELBOURNE."

Two days later he, who felt a deep sympathy for her sufferings, wrote to her :

“ It is vain to rail, otherwise I could do so too ; but it was at all times easy to see that it was the most dangerous and ill-conditioned creature possible, and that there was nothing that might not be expected from such a mixture of folly and malignity. You have now real friends about you. You describe me very truly when you say that I am always more annoyed that there is a row, than sorry for the persons engaged in it. But, after all, you know you can count upon me. I wonder that you should think it possible that I should communicate your letters to any one else. I have heard no one mention the subject. Lord Holland did, in one of his letters, and I answered him exactly to the effect you told me, and as I must have done without being told, namely, that I had seen you with Norton the day before you left town, and that I knew he was perfectly well acquainted with your intention of going into the country, because he, in my hearing, suggested putting it off from Wednesday, I believe, until Saturday.

“ I have also seen one paragraph relating to the matter in one of the newspapers, and this is all that has reached me. I shall be in town again on Monday. Adieu,

“ Yours,
“ MELBOURNE.”

CHAPTER IV

Norton proposes to part from his Wife—Vile Threats—What Colonel Stanhope wrote—Lord Melbourne writes from Panshanger—Sir James Graham sees Norton—Mrs. Norton writes to Mrs. Shelley—Norton is persuaded to sue for a Divorce—Political Considerations—Norton's Hopes—Charles Greville's Remarks—Lord Melbourne tenders his Resignation to the King, who refuses to accept it—The Duke of Wellington's Statement—Mrs. Norton dines with Abraham Haywood—The low Tories exult—Quotation from the *Age*—Lord Melbourne prepares for the Ordeal—Sir John Campbell, the Attorney-General, is retained by the Premier—Sir William Follett undertakes Norton's Case—Preparing for the Fight—Lord Melbourne's Letter to Mrs. Norton—His Statement to Lord Campbell—Sir William Follet's Opinion of the Evidence—Norton miscalculates his Chances

CHAPTER IV

ACTING on the advice of her family, Mrs. Norton made no advances to the husband who had behaved so brutally, but sent his mother an account of the occurrences which had just happened. On his part Norton requested Colonel Leicester Fitzgerald Charles Stanhope, afterwards fifth Earl of Harrington, a friend of both husband and wife, to write to her family telling them he would part from her but would make no provision for her, nor suffer her to have charge of the children, as they were legally and entirely at his disposal.

In forwarding this statement to Mrs. Norton, Colonel Leicester Stanhope declared that her husband's proposal that she might write for her bread was "too bad, too shabby, too mean, too base"; adding, "he grafts you on your brother." On submitting the proposal to her trustee she was assured it was no less contemptible than absurd, and that she should not hesitate a moment in rejecting it. "They must think you have lost your brains when they call on you to subsist by them," commented this legal person. Her family then wrote to Colonel Leicester Stanhope,

explaining to him certain facts in her domestic life, to which they added their opinions of Norton's character and behaviour, enclosed extracts from his letters, and refused to accede to his terms.

On hearing the substance of this communication, Norton angrily declared that as his wife would not part from him quietly he would publicly endeavour to disgrace her; that already he had put his affairs in the hands of the lawyers, had pledged himself not to interfere, and was not allowed to mention what they thought of doing; but that he himself was occupied with enquiries into her conduct towards her male acquaintances in general, and would try for a divorce if a case could be made out; and finally, that as his wife's family had conspired against him, they must maintain her. That this was no mere boast, was soon afterwards proved when Norton contrived by a ruse to send the servant of a man he suspected, to the club with directions to obtain his masters letters.

Norton having failed to find evidence which would incriminate his wife with her male acquaintances in general, resolved to bring an action for divorce against her in which he would make Lord Melbourne co-respondent. Having communicated this intention, together with all that could be said against his wife, to Colonel Stanhope, the latter wrote to him saying he had told her family all the base calumnies uttered against her, and would do the same by him. "They say," he stated, "that you kept a mistress. They say that you wanted to borrow fifteen hundred pounds

from Lord Melbourne ; that you accepted favours from Lord —— after professing jealousy of him ; that your wife made by her writings a sum more than sufficient to pay all your debts ; that you have yourself denied her to visitors and even to members of her own family, when Lord Melbourne has been with her ; that you have used personal violence to your wife. Unless you can disprove these accusations, you are lost in the estimate of the world."

A copy of this note was forwarded by Colonel Stanhope to Mrs. Norton, who, distracted by her husband's latest and most outrageous action and humiliated that it should be directed against one who had been his benefactor, immediately wrote to Lord Melbourne telling him of Norton's intentions, and enclosing Colonel Stanhope's letter. His reply, dated Panshanger, April 10th, said : "I have just received your letter, with Leicester Stanhope's enclosed, with which I am much pleased. He could not have acted better, nor with more discretion. Never, to be sure, was there such conduct. To set on foot that sort of enquiry without the slightest real ground for it. But it does not surprise me. I have always known that there was there a mixture of folly and violence, which might lead to any absurdity, or any injustice. You know so well my opinion, that it is unnecessary for me to repeat it. I have always told you that a woman should never part from her husband whilst she can remain with him.

"If this is generally the case, it is particularly so

in such a case as yours : that is, in the case of a young handsome woman of lively imagination, fond of company and conversation, and whose celebrity and superiority have necessarily created many enemies. Depend upon it if a reconciliation is feasible, there can be no doubt of the prudence of it. It is so evident that it is unnecessary to expatiate upon it. Lord Holland, who is almost the only person who has mentioned the subject to me, is entirely of that opinion."

To accept this advice in the philosophic spirit in which it was given, was beyond the power of a woman writhing under the bitter indignation and public wrong inflicted on her by the man from whom she had already suffered so much ; and before many days were over Lord Melbourne was again endeavouring to soothe her boiling indignation. "I hope you will not take it ill," he said, "if I implore you to try at least, to be calm under these trials. You know that what is alleged (if it be alleged) is utterly false, and what is false can rarely be made to appear true. The steps which it will be prudent to take, it will be impossible to determine until we know more certainly the course that is intended to be pursued. If any servant of mine, or any one that has left within the last six years had been interrogated, I think I should have heard of it. But whoever may be interrogated, no one can depose anything which can affect you or me.

"Yours,
"MELBOURNE."

The day after he had forwarded his letter to Norton, Colonel Leicester Stanhope called on him, and was received by a solicitor named Maclean, who introducing himself said it was agreed that Norton should not receive any visitors. Colonel Stanhope then talked of the accusations Norton had made, and challenged him to answer them ; on which he was frigidly told that the present was not the time to reply, nor was he the person to whom it would be made. On this he left, but took an early opportunity of writing to Norton and saying : " I now see clearly that you are surrounded by a clique of lawyers and friends, and under their influence, who keep your person and your mind imprisoned. Put your jailors to the test. Let them answer the accusations in my letter, and let them answer this additional charge. You are accused, (not by me) of having intended to procure a magistracy for a gentleman for a compensation in money. Ask your lawyers and the friends who influence them, if this charge were proved whether you would be allowed to sit on the judgment seat."

This letter was answered by Norton saying airily : " As regards the *on dits* stated in yours, this does not appear to be the time to enter upon the refutation of them, which I should otherwise court an opportunity of obtaining." He was not, however, in haste to seek such opportunities, for soon after writing this reply he sought a conciliatory interview with Sir James Graham, who it will be remembered had married Fanny, daughter of Colonel Callander, of Craigforth,

Stirlingshire, and sister of Mrs. Tom Sheridan. Sir James had won distinction as one of the advanced reformers in the House of Commons who had proposed a motion for the reduction of official salaries; who later had attacked the salaries received by privy councillors; who was made one of the committee of four entrusted with the preparation of the first Reform Bill; and who, as First Lord of the Admiralty under Earl Grey, had introduced essential retrenchments in the financial department. In appearance he was tall and handsome, in manner somewhat stiff and pompous, and the cold civility of his reception of Norton by no means helped to place that individual at his ease.

In this interview he told Sir James, that as his lawyers could obtain no proof of error against Mrs. Norton, he was willing to come to such terms of separation as could be agreed upon. On hearing this Sir James declared that the preliminary to all negotiations must be a written retraction by Norton of all slanders uttered against his wife. After a pause Norton enquired whether, if he agreed to this, her family would contradict what they had said of him, as otherwise it would leave him in his wife's power. Sir James refused to discuss this condition, and Norton left promising to call again. The proposed divorce proceedings were now supposed to have ended and it was thought that another reconciliation between husband and wife was not improbable, on which Colonel Stanhope wrote to Mrs. Norton saying:

"Thank God your persecutors have terminated

their labours. Their object was not truth or justice ; not to examine into your character, but solely to criminate you. It has ended in your honour and their disgrace. Norton's conduct is really disreputable ; but far less so than those who have hunted him on."

The prospect of seeing and living with her children once more filled their mother with delight, and in joy she wrote to her friend Mrs. Shelley, saying : "My affairs are I really think, ending well. There has been no end of worry and no end of lies ; but I trust all is settled or settling. My patient, generous, and enthusiastic son is managing for me. I trust I shall not destroy his faith in my wrongs by a simple love for himself."

All hopes she felt at the avoidance of a great scandal, at the prospect of regaining her children, and of returning to her home, were soon ended by Norton's unstable nature and irresponsible mind. For being assured that reconciliation with his wife, after the statements he had made and the action he had taken, would place him in a humiliating position, and that the triumph must remain with one of whose superiority he had always been jealous, he changed his intentions at the last moment ; probably because to the reasons already mentioned was added another and more powerful ; for certain personages, seeing in Norton's quarrel with his wife, an opportunity for a hit at Lord Melbourne and his government, persuaded Norton to continue the divorce suit.

Its announcement caused an incredible sensation not merely in social, but in political circles, at a date when, as already intimated, strife between Whig and Tory raged with a malignance impossible to realise in more tolerant days.

Those who honestly believed that under the guidance of the Whigs the country was being steered to swift destruction, those who desired to conciliate the court, those who longed for personal place and power, combined in their hatred of the Liberals, whom it became their strenuous aim to depose. Therefore some of the less scrupulous of the Tory party, saw in the proposed action for divorce, the overthrow of Melbourne and that diverse cabinet which his ability, his fine tact, and his broad tolerance, with difficulty held together; for many considered that the mere charge of guilt would make a man of his sensitive temperament and high sense of honour resign his post; while all knew that its proof would irretrievably exclude him from the services or patronage of the future monarch, whose reign, it was foreseen, would not much longer be delayed.

Among those most prominent in using this divorce as a political weapon were the King's brother, the Duke of Cumberland, notorious for his ill-will to the Whigs, and Lord Wynford, a barrister, a member of parliament, a puisne judge and a friend of Lord Grantley, Norton's brother. In the beginning of his career, Lord Wynford, or as he then was William Draper Best, had been an ardent Whig; but the

slowness of his progress toward promotion under the Government had timely opened his eyes to its wickedness, and he had embraced Tory principles with the vehemence of a convert, and with an enthusiasm that found its coveted reward in a pension and a title.

Besides acting as a willing tool in the hands of the Tories, Norton had a more personal motive in bringing this action. Should the prime minister, out of chivalrous consideration for the reputation of the woman he admired and respected, for the sake of political ambitions, or in deference to the wishes of the party depending on him, prevent the case from coming into court by the private payment of a heavy sum to its instigator, the latter would gain the end he most desired. If on the other hand it was permitted to proceed, his own base view of human motives led him to hope it would not be defended ; but that his wife would willingly suffer the appearances of guilt and the censure of the world in order that when divorced she might marry the premier, who could give her a title, wealth, and position ; a contingency that must also benefit Norton who would have heavy damages awarded him by a sympathetic jury of indignant husbands. But unfortunately for his chances of gain, both his wife and Lord Melbourne were determined to have their innocence made clear before a public that impatiently awaited the unfolding of a drama in which the chief actors were persons of the highest distinction.

Under date May 11th, 1836, Charles Greville records in his journal that there was great talk about the adjournment of parliament, "and about Melbourne's affair with Mrs. Norton, which latter if it is not quashed, will be inconvenient. John Bull," he continues, "fancies himself vastly moral, and the Court is mighty prudish, and between them our off-hand premier will find himself in a ticklish position. He has been served with notices, but people rather doubt the action coming on. I asked the Duke of Wellington a night or two ago what he had heard of it, and what he thought would be the result. He said he had only heard what everybody said, and that nothing would result. I said: 'Would Melbourne resign?' 'Oh Lord, no. Resign? Not a bit of it. I tell you all these things are a nine days' wonder; it can't come into court before parliament is up. People will have done talking of it before that happens; it will all blow over and won't signify a straw.'

That his Grace was wrong in at least one of his statements was proved a couple of days later, when the prime minister tendered his resignation to the King, who blusterously refused to accept it; whilst on hearing of this action the Duke of Wellington generously declared he would be no party to any arrangements which such a step would involve. By the end of the month Charles Greville made another entry in his journal regarding the approaching trial, at which he says Lord Melbourne and his relatives were very much annoyed. "The low Tories," he

continues, "the herd, exult at this misfortune, and find a motive for petty political gratification in it, but not so the Duke of Wellington, or any of them who are above the miserable feelings of party spite. I am very sorry for it, because it is a bad thing to see men in high places dragged through the mire."

As the time of the trial drew near the Tory press became bolder in its statements of what might be expected to transpire; and asserted that letters seized by Norton and addressed to his wife by Lord Melbourne, when read at the trial would prove the latter to have been guilty of the most shameless profligacy. In commenting on "The Recent Separation in High Life," the *Age* of May 15th says: "The injured husband having possessed himself of certain unequivocal letters and documents, has determined upon seeking legal satisfaction. The writ it is said was served upon the noble intrigant on Monday last, the damages being laid at thirty thousand pounds. A gallant colonel, a friend of the lady, was sent on a mission to secure her papers, but failed in securing some most important letters, amongst others from Prince Leopold and Lord Mulgrave, which must be made public on the trial. The affair has been submitted to the noble brother of the plaintiff, who has consulted Lord Wynford and an illustrious duke, upon the course he ought to pursue. All hopes therefore of any amicable arrangement are, we should suppose, quite out of the question. We have said enough to show that we know a great

deal more, but to make the extent of our information public would be at the present time premature."

The prime minister prepared for his ordeal by engaging for the defence the attorney-general, Sir John, afterwards first Baron Campbell, who is best remembered as the author of "Lives of the Chancellors." A native of Scotland and a descendant from Archibald, second Earl of Argyll on the one side, and from Robert Duke of Albany and Regent of Scotland on the other, he had been destined for the ministry, of which his father had been a shining light; but the prospect of vegetating in a country parish, was so appalling to this youth, that he resolved to write for the press, and read for the Bar, where self-confidence assured him he should find success. His clever brain, untiring industry, and burning ambition, raised him step by step in his profession. To obtain success and its compensations, became the object of his life; so that understanding the man, one of his colleagues remarked: "If Campbell had engaged as an opera dancer, I do not say he would have danced as well as Deshayes, but I feel confident he would have got a higher salary." To such a counsel Lord Melbourne felt certain he might confidently entrust his case; for not only was he a sound lawyer and an able pleader, but his own interest in retaining his position as attorney-general depended on his obtaining for his client a verdict of acquittal, which could alone keep him and his party in power.

On the other side Norton or those acting for him,

engaged the services of Sir William Webb Follett, a Tory who became a King's Counsel in the Michaelmas term of 1834, and held office as solicitor-general under Sir Robert Peel's administration from the November of that year until its close in April 1835; a position in which the fall of Lord Melbourne's Government would no doubt reinstate him. Sir William, who at his death was considered sufficiently eminent to have a statue erected to him in Westminster Abbey, was neither remarkable for his classical learning nor his general information; whilst his pleading was without fire or rhetoric. He was, however, notable for his lucidity, his promptitude, and an overwhelming influence and persuasiveness that had before now moulded the minds of juries to his wishes. Sir William Follett was therefore considered a formidable rival to the attorney-general; and as at this stage it was unknown what allegations might be made by the witnesses summoned to support Norton's case, gnawing suspense and depressing fears were felt by the defendants.

The trial was set down for hearing towards the end of June 1836; and from the beginning of that month both sides busied themselves in preparing for a desperate fight for and against a woman's honour, a man's high position, and the continuance or downfall of a Government. Among the harassing incidents that now daily beset Mrs. Norton—paragraphs in newspapers, gossipings of her enemies, averted heads of the malicious, was the visit of a solicitor employed

in Lord Melbourne's defence, who in reply to her protestations of innocence, showed a passive incredulity that stirred her anger, and incited her to bitter complaints of him to Lord Melbourne. The accusations, she said, according to the views of society, mattered little to the premier, but they meant life and death to her as a woman, and that in future she would refuse to see this solicitor if he insulted her by expressing his disbelief in her blamelessness. In reply to these remarks, the prime minister, always patient and considerate of others even in the midst of his own grave troubles, wrote to her on June 9th, saying :

"I have read your letter and have given such instructions as I trust will be for the best. I do not wonder at the impression made upon you. I knew it would be so, and therefore I was almost unwilling to have the interview take place. All the attorneys that I have ever seen, have all the same manner : hard, cold, incredulous, distrustful, sarcastic, and sneering. They are accustomed to be conversant with the worst part of human nature, and with the most discreditable transactions. They have so many falsehoods told them, that they place confidence in none."

Then followed a statement that, whilst removed from a complaint, revealed for a moment the sore state of his feelings which to the world remained hidden under the surface of a placid ease, mistaken by some for indifference. "I declare," he writes on June

9th, "that since I first heard I was to be proceeded against, I have suffered more intently than I ever did in my life. I had neither sleep nor appetite, and I attribute the whole of my illness (at least of the severity of it) to the uneasiness of my mind. Now what is this uneasiness for? Not for my own character, because, as you justly say, the imputation upon me is as nothing. It is not for the political consequences to myself, although I deeply feel the consequences which my indiscretion may bring upon those who are attached to me and follow my fortunes. The real and principal object of my anxiety and solicitude is you, and the situation in which you have been so unjustly placed, by the circumstances which have taken place."

It may have been that something of the like incredulity which Mrs. Norton had resented in her visitor, was visible in the countenances of Lord Melbourne's counsel, who with Sir John Campbell included Serjeant Talfourd and Mr. Thesiger, when he attended a consultation on his case at the house of the attorney-general. Melbourne wished that this might take place at his own residence in South Street or in Downing Street; "but I," wrote sturdy Sir John, "would make no exception in favour of the premier to the rule that the client must come to the counsel." The impression made on Lord Melbourne at this meeting, induced him to write the following protestation of his innocence three days later to the attorney-general.

"I have been thinking over again the matter of this

trial, and I know not that I have anything to add to what I have already written, and to what passed the other day at the consultation. I repeat that I wish it to be stated in the most clear, distinct, and emphatic manner that I have never committed adultery with Mrs. Norton, that I have never held with her any furtive or clandestine correspondence whatever, and that both in visiting and in writing to her I always considered myself to be acting with the full knowledge and with the entire approbation of her husband. My visits, for instance, were neither more nor less frequent when he was away than when he was at home.

“At the same time I wish any evidence which may come out of this nature to be so managed as to appear to be used rather for the purpose of vindicating me than of criminating him. The first must be my principal, if not my sole object. If I cannot persuade the jury that there has been no criminal intercourse, it will be of little advantage to my character to show that I thought I was carrying it on with the knowledge and connivance of the husband. These arrangements are supposed frequently to exist, and whilst they are only supposed, they are certainly treated with great indulgence and made the subject of jest and levity. But a different judgment is pronounced upon them when they are proved and established in a court of justice. There is great indignation against him, and a great desire to see him exposed, but we must consider what is best for ourselves. If you require any further explanation or instruction, I shall be happy to give it.”

It would have immensely relieved Mrs. Norton and Lord Melbourne had they known that, notwithstanding the evidence threatened by their opponents, Sir William Follett considered the characters of the witnesses so bad, that he gravely doubted the probability of obtaining a verdict of guilty. Although retained for the case since April 25th, he might never have appeared in it, had the complete evidence not been withheld from him until June 14th, eight days before its hearing, when no course was open but to proceed with the action. Mrs. Norton says it was made perfectly clear that some of those concerned in the trial "were careless what might be the result, so long as there was an overwhelming public scandal ; and as to Mr. Norton himself, his conduct was infinitely less rash and unreasonable than the event would make it appear ; since he had over and over again admitted that he had a secret reliance the case would not be defended at all. Those who had instigated him came to the trial doubtful of the result, but confident of the scandal ; Mr. Norton came to it, careless of the scandal, and confident of the result. He miscalculated his chances, only because the trial was defended."

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CHAPTER V

The Morning of the Melbourne Divorce Case—The Attorney General's Anxiety—Crowds round Westminster Hall—Sir William Follett states his Case—The Door in Birdcage Walk—Lord Melbourne's Letters—Heavy Compensation is demanded—Discreditable Witnesses—Sir John Campbell's Speech—The Jury becomes impatient—How the Verdict was received—The Attorney-General shows Himself in the House of Commons—Mrs. Norton's Letter to Mrs. Shelley—Laws made by Men for Women—The Premier writes to Mrs. Norton—The Duke of Cumberland's Statement—Lord Melbourne professes himself satisfied—Mrs. Norton's Anxiety about her Sons—Desperate Attempt to carry them off—The Prime Minister's Advice—She consults a Great Lawyer—Her helpless Condition—Bitter Protestations—The Children are sent to Scotland—Norton sues for Reconciliation—Fresh Indignities—Sir John Bayley as Arbitrator—His Opinion of his Client—Self Revelations—Lord Melbourne loses his Son—Succession to his Estates

CHAPTER V

THE long anticipated date of June 22nd, 1836, the day fixed for the hearing of the Melbourne divorce suit, at last arrived, when curiosity and sensation which had been increasing for months, rose to a seething climax. Not since Queen Caroline had been accused of infidelity by her royal consort had public interest been so stirred to its depths as now, when the prime minister was charged with a scandalous connection with a woman whose descent, beauty, and talent had raised her to celebrity; and never before had so much depended on any civil trial in an English Court; for it was known that a verdict of guilty would involve the fall of the Government and influence the political relations existing between this country and the rest of Europe. For this reason—in days when telegrams were unknown—couriers were ready to start for foreign courts with news of the result.

The man on whom, to some extent, this depended, the attorney-general Sir John Campbell, although implicitly believing in the defendant's protestation of

innocence, naturally felt the anxiety and suspense of the trial weigh heavily upon him ; and on the night previous to its hearing, as he relates in his diary, he lay wakeful and restless. As a result he overslept himself in the morning, and when he woke was obliged to dress hurriedly and rush from his house without waiting to breakfast. On reaching Westminster Hall at nine o'clock, he found the entrance to the Court of Common Pleas in which the case was to be heard, surrounded by a dense and clamorous mass, each eager to gain admittance whilst knowing that not a tithe of them could find room within the building.

Seeing them packed, seemingly impenetrable, and determined to hold their own, the attorney-general, impatient and anxious, despaired of getting to the court ; and was only enabled to reach his place after a considerable time and by the exertions of some broad shouldered and genial members of the police force. When at last the doors of the court were flung open, those foremost in the rush were grievously disappointed ; for not only had all the barristers in town availed themselves of their privilege of an early admission, but the galleries were crowded with those who had paid from five to ten guineas for a seat.

At half-past nine o'clock precisely, Lord Chief Justice Tindal took his place on the Bench, he having been appointed to his position in succession to Sir William Draper Best. Though a staunch Tory, whose views were opposed to Lord Melbourne, it was confidently felt that his high principles and

rigid impartiality would not allow any prejudice to interfere in his hearing of the case. Seated on the Bench beside him were Lord Grantley, described as the patron of this action, together with Lords Lucan and Lichfield. Sir William Follett, Mr. Crowder, and Mr. Bayley appeared for the plaintiff, while the attorney-general, Mr. Serjeant Talfourd, and Mr. Thesiger undertook the defence. Mrs. Norton not being a recognised party to the suit could not according to our laws be represented by counsel, although liable to the most grievous penalty a verdict could inflict.

Mr. Bayley opened the pleadings, after which Sir William Follett stated his case in a full, mellow voice that gave grace to an emphatic manner; the gaze of all present being turned on his tall, slight figure, his delicate, long face with its fine brow, wide expressive mouth, and grey eyes. The first part of his speech was occupied in explaining the position of Lord Melbourne and Mrs. Norton. The former had, Sir William next pointed out, given Norton an appointment as police magistrate which kept him sometimes engaged until six or seven in the evenings, at which times he dined in the neighbourhood of his court and did not return to his home until late. But meanwhile Lord Melbourne was Mrs. Norton's constant visitor, generally calling on her about three in the afternoon when the duties of the Home Office were over. The attention of the jury was specially drawn to the means by which the prime minister gained access to the

house, that had two entrances, one in Bird Cage Walk, the other in Prince's Court. The door in Bird Cage Walk was generally used by visitors, said Sir William, and to one coming from the Home Office would be the most convenient; but the damning fact remained that this elderly lover was never admitted by that entrance but invariably by the door in Prince's Court, across whose portal no one else was allowed to pass.

A still greater point was made of the letters of whose incriminating contents so much had been said and written for months past. As Sir William proceeded to read them, the swaying, perspiring mass in the body of the airless building became so restless and noisy that the judge threatened to clear the court, and added to its suffocation by ordering its doors to be closed. When silence was gained, Sir William in his clear, denunciatory voice read the first of these accusatory communications which ran, "I will call about half-past four: yours, Melbourne." A crowded court waited breathlessly to hear more, and was not disappointed. The second letter boldly said: "How are you? I shall not be able to call to-day; but probably shall to-morrow." The third and last of these dire epistles dared to say: "No House to-day. I will call after the levee, about four or half-past. If you wish it later, let me know. I shall then explain about going to Vauxhall."

"These are the only notes which have been found," Sir William told a wondering jury, and bitterly disappointed court. "If the others were like them, they

probably may have been destroyed ; but even these are not in the style and form of address of notes a gentleman would write to a lady with whom he was merely on friendly terms. They seem to admit much more than the words convey. They are written cautiously, I admit ; there is no passion of love in them ; they are not love letters, but they are not written in the ordinary style of correspondence usually adopted in this country between intimate friends, or mutual acquaintances."

After briefly referring to the evidence that would be given by servants, he declared that the damages to which the plaintiff was entitled, "was most important as bearing on the result of the proceedings." Lord Melbourne's rank was an aggravation, his age was an aggravation, "as well as the pretence that he was a friend of Mrs. Norton's father and a benefactor of her husband. How are you to compensate Mr. Norton for his injury?" Sir William asked ; and then with an air of virtuous indignation he assured them that though money could not compensate Mr. Norton for the irretrievable loss of domestic happiness and the torture of this trial, yet he asked them as husbands and fathers to mark their sympathy with his foul wrongs by awarding him a handsome sum.

Evidence was then given by witnesses called for the plaintiff, all of them discarded servants whose characters did not bear investigation, and who had for a considerable time before the trial, been kept out of the way at Lord Grantley's country seat near

Guildford. The chief of these was a coachman named Fluke, who had been dismissed for drunkenness by Norton, and who with his wife and family had bag and baggage been sent to Guildford ; having received, as he swore, ten pounds for the expenses of a journey of as many miles, and been promised, as he boasted, six hundred pounds for giving evidence in which he had several times been rehearsed. It was not until after the trial that it became known that this man, who proudly styled himself the prime witness against the prime minister of England, aware of his importance, had tyrannised over his employers, and refused to leave Guildford unless he had chicken and duckling for breakfast and was conveyed in a chaise and four to London.

Coming into the court in a semi-drunken state, he admitted that he was in the habit of "taking a drop too much," and added, "we are all alike in that, masters and servants." His statements were too preposterous for belief and cross-examination proved them to be inventions. The women servants who gave evidence were scarcely more credible, and none of them swore to any circumstances that had happened within the three preceding years. Had any of them been believed their statements would have proved fatal to Mrs. Norton's case. Sir John Campbell, who was unaware of what statements might be made, admits he was in a state of great tremor until Sir William Follett "read the much talked of letters from the prime minister, when I could breathe, for they were

ludicrously immaterial, like the parody of them by Dickens about ‘chops and tomato sauce’ in the trial of Pickwick.” His confidence increased when the first witness, the Rev. William Fletcher, who had performed the marriage service for his brother, stated in cross-examination that in calling on Mrs. Norton he invariably entered the house by the same door as Lord Melbourne, when the latter paid his supposed clandestine visits ; and that he, the parson, did so “without any improper views” upon his sister-in-law ; a statement so gravely, so naïvely made as to create a loud laugh, in which judge and jury joined. It was then shown that the so-called secret entrance in Prince’s Court, was in reality the hall door, which boasted of bell and knocker and was used by visitors and tradesmen alike ; whilst the door in Bird Cage Walk was made of glass, and formed one of the windows of the dining-room.

The plaintiff’s case did not finish until half-past six in the afternoon, when the attorney-general feeling exhausted and fearing the jury might be so likewise, applied for an adjournment ; but as he did not propose to call witnesses, the jurymen desired that the case should be continued, a wish in which the judge concurred. “I was not at all in a good state of mind or stomach when my turn came to address the jury,” Sir John wrote to a friend ; “and I was under the most exquisitely painful apprehension that I might not be able to do my duty.” However, with an effort he braced himself for the ordeal, and began his

speech for the defence by saying he readily agreed to the wishes of the jury and personally he rejoiced that the trial was to proceed. After nine hours of unremitting attention he thought that an interval of repose might possibly enable him better to do justice to his client's cause, and might more satisfactorily prepare them to appreciate the observations which it would be his duty to submit to them. "But I shall escape a night of anxiety, and you will have the satisfaction before you leave the court of pronouncing a verdict of acquittal."

Proceeding to analyse the evidence given, he branded it as a tissue of fabrications which it was impossible men of discernment and impartiality could believe. Continuing his speech, Sir John told the jury :

"The effect of your verdict on the councils of the Sovereign, of which so much has been said out of doors, and the anticipation of which may have given rise to the action, can have no influence on your minds, and with me all public considerations are merged in anxiety for the private character and happiness of the individuals whose fate is involved in the result of this memorable trial. To Lord Melbourne it is probably a matter of no great moment whether he is to retain or lose the power and patronage of office ; but it is of the last importance to him that he should not be regarded as a systematic libertine, as a contemnor of all the rules of religion and of honour. I believe I may say of him, in the words applied to a predecessor

of his, that in the midst of a strong administration, with many political opponents, he is almost without a personal enemy. You may judge how he is beloved by his private friends, who have the opportunity of witnessing the frankness of his demeanour, the simplicity as well as elegance of his manners, the unaffected hilarity of his disposition, and his unceasing respect for the feelings of others."

At the same time the attorney-general declared he could not contemplate without deep emotion the effect of the verdict upon the fate of the lady. "In the pride of beauty, in the exuberance of youthful spirits, flattered by the admirers of her genius, she may have excited envy, and may not have borne her triumph with uniform moderation and meekness; but her principles have been unshaken, her heart has been pure; as a wife her conduct has been irreproachable; as a mother she has set a bright example to her sex."

The most important points in his address were left for the last, when he said:

"Before I conclude I am bound by the express instructions of Lord Melbourne to declare in the most solemn and emphatic manner, that he is innocent of the charge brought against him, and that neither by word nor deed has he ever abused the confidence reposed in him by Mr. Norton. I know well, gentlemen, that you cannot act upon this assertion, and I do not seek to influence by it that verdict which you have sworn to find according to the evidence. Look at the evidence, and if it supports this charge, I desire

you, regardless of the consequences, to find a verdict for the plaintiff with exemplary damages. But the evidence instead of bringing home guilt to the accused, only reflects disgrace on the accuser.

“Gentlemen, this action must have originated in a scheme to overthrow the present Government by traducing the private character of its chief, though the honour of an innocent female and the happiness of a respectable family should be the necessary sacrifice. There is no more moral guilt in the assassinations and poisonings to which the struggles of political parties have given rise in other countries and ages. This attempt, if successful, would be more cruel to its victims, by allowing them to live when life has become a burden ; and more dangerous to society, as it would be perpetrating a great crime through the forms of the law, and committing sacrilege in the very temple of justice. But such an attempt can never succeed till Englishmen have lost the love of truth, the fairness, the firmness by which they have been distinguished, and until trial by jury, hitherto the palladium of our rights and liberties, shall be converted into an instrument of our degradation and oppression.”

Though the speech was not more prosy than other deliverances of its kind, the jury as they listened to it showed signs of the greatest impatience ; for having made up their minds regarding their verdict, they considered the attorney-general's words unnecessary. He had not finished before the light of this midsummer day had faded from the court, giving place to a yellow

flare of gas that showed the stern massive features of the judge, pale above the scarlet gleam of his robes ; the tired figures of the jury as they sat limp and relaxed, exhausted by the suffocating atmosphere ; and the white faces of those packed closely in the galleries and body of the hall, patient, unrelieved in their anxiety, curious, and determined to await the end.

It was close upon eleven when the judge, with that accuracy of statement, sagacity, and rigid impartiality for which he was famous, began his charge ; which the jury, growing more impatient, made several attempts to interrupt. He had barely ended when the foreman announced that he and his fellows were unanimous in finding a verdict for the defendant ; on which a thunderous cheer rent the sluggish atmosphere of the hall. The judge severely remarked that he was quite surprised to hear a verdict received in a court of justice in so disgraceful a manner ; a remark greeted with renewed cheers that were repeated by the dense mass waiting outside the hall, whose voices penetrating the House of Commons then sitting, produced an immense sensation there.

Flushed with victory the attorney-general admits that he could not resist the temptation of showing himself in the House, which was that night unusually crowded. The instant he was seen at the Bar a wild cheer broke out, and he walked to his place in the midst of the most rapturous plaudits. "The Tories," he says, "even affected to cheer, although the result was a deep disappointment to them. I cannot say

with whom the action originated, but I do aver that it was taken up with great eagerness by the great bulk of the Tory party, and that they were most cruelly mortified when it failed."

In referring to this celebrated case, Charles Greville says that the town has been full of it, and that great exultation was felt at its result by Melbourne's political adherents, great disappointment by the "the mob of low Tories, and a creditable satisfaction among the better sort ; it was, in point of fact, a very triumphant acquittal. The wonder is," he continues, "how with such a case Norton's family ventured into Court ; but (although it is stoutly denied) there can be no doubt that old Wynford was at the bottom of it all, and persuaded Lord Grantley to urge it on for mere political purposes. There is pretty conclusive evidence of this. The Rev. William Fletcher Norton, who was examined on the trial, is staying in town with a Mr. Lowe, a Nottinghamshire parson, and Denison who is Norton's neighbour called on him the other day ; Denison talked to Lowe, who told him that Fletcher Norton had shown him the case on which they were going to proceed, and that he had told him he thought it was a very weak one, to which he had replied so did he, but he believed they expected it would produce a very important political effect. The King behaved very civilly about it, and expressed his satisfaction at the result in terms sufficiently flattering to Melbourne."

The acquittal of the prime minister by no means

satisfied the Whig press, which, indignant at the conduct of the Tory instigators of the divorce suit, cried out for their punishment. The *Examiner* asserted that a more flagrant conspiracy supported by more manifest perjury, had never occurred in the annals of Westminster Hall ; and hoped that proceedings might be taken that would clear away the mystification surrounding the chief actors in the plot and expose them to the vengeance of the law.

Lord Melbourne, however, always placid and tolerant, seemed perfectly satisfied with the result of the trial, and the morning after wrote to the attorney-general to offer his best thanks for his successful exertion and his whole conduct of the case. "I hold," he added, "the obtaining a verdict to have been a most difficult achievement, considering the prejudices, both general and personal, which naturally prevailed upon the subject, and considering the latitude of inference in which Courts of Justice think themselves justified in indulging in these cases, and the reliance they are disposed to place upon circumstantial evidence, both of which principles of proceeding must, I feel certain, often lead to gross injustice, as they would in the present case if the verdict had been the other way."

A letter written two days later, June 25th, from Hampton Court Palace by Mrs. Norton to Mrs. Shelley, shows her feelings at the moment of her triumph. After thanking the poet's widow for her congratulations and speaking of the kindness of her friends,

she declares it is impossible not to feel bitterly the disgusting details of the unhappy trial.

“You will see, if you have read it,” she says, “that the girl Eliza Gibson deposes that every day, or generally every day, during the months of July, August, and September 1833, I was occupied painting and singing. In that August my youngest child was born, and during that September I was on the sofa, and when I was able to move I went to Worthing, with my children. She says too, that Mr. Norton examined her, knowing it not only to be a lie, but a lie which the parish register, or the nurse who sat in the witness-room, could contradict in a moment.

“Well, a woman is made a helpless wretch by these laws of men, or she would be allowed a defence, a counsel in such an hour. I was in Spring Gardens, I could send notes to disprove the evidence of each witness, and they were of no use unless they bore upon the defendant’s case. To go for nothing, in a trial which decides one’s fate for life, is hard. However, it is past and I am very thankful. I have not yet heard what is to become of my poor boys; but I am not now obliged to remain inactive as before. I have been very seriously ill ever since that day and half a night of terrible suspense.

“I can say nothing more at present, therefore I will conclude by thanking you once more for the kind interest you have shown, and promising to send

you news of what is settled to be done. I suppose your son is not with you yet. I hope he will always be a pleasure and a pride to you, who have so much of the mother in your heart,—and am (stupefied and beat),

“ Yours very truly,

“ CAROLINE NORTON.”

Though her innocence was vindicated she keenly felt the gross humiliation of having her name dragged through the mire, made the subject of discussion by the press, of gossip in every club and drawing-room, and for days she remained in her mother's apartments at Hampton Court Palace, utterly prostrate. One result of her depression and pain was to end, temporarily, all communication between her and Lord Melbourne, on which he wrote expressing his surprise at her silence. In reply she told him she had neither heart nor spirit to write, and that the one thing in life she desired, was a sight of her children, the boys who were all the world to her, and for half-an-hour's talk with whom she had pleaded to the man who had treated her with such cruel malignity. Her words were bitter and desponding, and the opening sentences of Lord Melbourne's answer to them were not comforting. “ His anger against Mr. Norton,” she says, “ for having submitted to be employed to injure not only him but his party, was mixed with something like reproach to me, for not having more keenly and severely judged and

foreseen the conduct of the husband I had toiled and asked favours for. I had a friend deeply wounded, and whom I grieved to wound."

In continuing his letter, Lord Melbourne's displeasure gave place to his usual kindly interest in this miserable wife and mother. "Well, come what may," he says, "I will never again, from silence or any other symptoms think that you can mean anything unkind or adverse to me. I have already told you that most of the bitterness which I have felt during this affair was upon your account. . . . I do not think your application to Norton was judicious.

"From the beginning your anxiety to prevent publicity has induced you to apply to him too much. Every communication elates him, and encourages him to persevere in his brutality. You ought to know him better than I do, and must do so. But you seem to me hardly aware what a *gnome* he is: how perfectly earthy and bestial. He is possessed of a devil; and that the meanest and basest fiend that disgraces the infernal regions. In my opinion he has somehow or other made this whole matter subservient to his pecuniary interest. He has got money by it, from — or some one else.

"I should feel certain of this, if it were not for his folly, which is so excessive as to render him incapable even of forwarding his own low designs."

A few days later and he wrote to her again saying:

"What I wanted to tell you was this: that a few days ago the Duke of Cumberland came up to

me in one of the lobbies of the House of Lords, and said : 'Have you seen Wynford ? He wishes to speak to you ; and it is in order to assure you, upon his honour, that he has had nothing to do with this affair. Nor indeed any of us. We would do nothing so ungentlemanlike. The moment I heard he was charged with it, I went to him, and asked him, and he solemnly denied it.' I replied that I never believed mere rumours and reports, that I had never thought it, and that His Royal Highness's declaration was of course perfectly satisfactory. When I went into the House of Lords, Lord Wynford sent one of the messengers to ask me to come over to him, as, being lame, he could not come to me. I went and he then repeated the disclaimer, already made by the Duke of Cumberland, and added that he had never heard of the action until four days after it had been commenced, and as to that unfortunate young man (as he termed Norton), who he said had been his ward—he had not seen him for these two or three years (I will not be certain of the precise time he mentioned, but it was a long one). I, of course declared myself perfectly satisfied."

In commenting on this letter, Mrs. Norton says : "A gentleman called upon to accept the disclaimer of other gentlemen, one of them a Prince of the blood Royal, could do no less. Lord Melbourne then had to profess himself 'satisfied' as a matter of course, but I was not satisfied. In the first place I knew it was not true that Lord Wynford had not

seen Mr. Norton for three years ; and I was assured that some of the witnesses had been examined at his house. As to the denial of the Duke of Cumberland, both Princes and Kings may be eagerly served without accepting the responsibility of their words ; and the trivial task of breaking up a ministry, need not weigh on the conscience like the riddance of Thomas à Becket. His Royal Highness's dissatisfaction at the success of the Whig party, and his dislike of its leader, were patent and unconcealed. Even those who were friends and adherents of that party were involved in the evidence of that dislike. I well remember when I attended the court receptions, even before the event of the mock trial, when it was merely surmised that I had influence with the Whig premier, that the Duke of Cumberland was the only royal personage who refused to acknowledge by the slightest salute, the courtesy I made to him, as to others in the royal circle. I mentioned it to Lord Melbourne. He said : ' You take these slights to yourself, but they are not put upon *you*.'

"After the denials, more or less angry, and more or less positive, made publicly by persons, the newspapers still debated the subject, and still boldly put the question : ' Who then is the man behind the screen ? ' The very wording of the Duke of Cumberland's denial, the very expression, '*Nor indeed any of us*,' assumed that Lord Melbourne suspected some of the Tory party were the real movers in the extraordinary, unexpected, and unfair attack made upon

him. I repeat that I know the King thought so ; and as for Lord Melbourne and myself, how could it seem otherwise than a plot ? He knew as I knew, however deceived the public might be, that he was not the cause of the domestic rupture which had taken place. He knew and I knew that to the very last day and hour of my stay under my husband's roof, he had been not only a welcome, but a peculiarly courted guest of Mr. Norton's ; that to the last favours had been begged of him, and friendliness sustained ; that for years his portrait had lain unchallenged, the principal ornament of our drawing-room table, and that I had never imagined it necessary to conceal from my husband, or any one else, the profound enthusiasm and regard I felt for that gifted and intellectual friend—who was of my father's generation, not mine."

Through sleepless nights and feverish days the endearing memories of her boys haunted her, and to regain them became the dominant endeavour of her life. In writing to Mrs. Shelley, ever a sympathetic friend, she tells her that her hope is to come to a peaceable agreement with her husband. "I will not say to outwit him, but to secure the boys. There is no length of desperation or of meanness, that one may not be driven to in my situation." As she was not allowed to see them, the daring idea occurred to her to carry them by stratagem from Lord Grantley's place where they were then kept. In writing to her on July 19th, 1836, the prime minister warned

her against this attempt, and pointed out the character of the individual with whom she had to deal.

“There is no knowing what that man may do now that he is left to the guidance of his own feelings, and his own understanding ; to the advice of those about him. You knew the state of your own domestic affairs better than I did. I only knew what you told me ; but it appeared to me, that by living with him you had grown less alive to his real character by being accustomed to it, and also that you were so used to manage him and to prevent his follies, that you relied too much on being able always to do it. Recollect when you were with him how stupidly and brutally he behaved ; particularly for instance to Helen. His conduct then, always struck me as showing a violence which was likely afterwards to break out. Now that he has nobody to advise, control, or soothe him, what follies or what abominable conduct he may pursue, it is impossible to conjecture. I pity you about the children.”

The attempt to regain her boys resulted in failure. In telling Mrs. Shelley of the endeavour, Mrs. Norton says, she saw them all, “carried Brin to the gate but could not open it, and was afraid they would tear him to pieces they caught him so fiercely. And the elder one was so frightened, he did not follow. It may be a sin, but I do curse them, and their dogged brutality ; if a strong arm had been with me I should have done it. I tell you this because I know you have a real wish to know.” After this the children

were sent to Scotland and placed under the care of a paternal aunt. In communicating this news, their sorrowing mother writes: "It shows the spite, the carelessness of all but the desire to torment me, that they have been sent off thus, without a soul even of their father's family to take care of them; no one but the Highland nurse, ignorant and violent."

Meantime some efforts were made by her solicitors to obtain a reasonable maintenance from Norton, who by the death of Miss Vaughan at this time, inherited two thousand a year, and who still retained the post of police magistrate, to which he had been appointed by the man whom he had publicly charged with foully wronging him. It was in reference to the negotiations for an allowance, concerning which she had consulted him, that Lord Melbourne wrote to her on July 24th, saying, he sent her back two copies of the proposal forwarded by her lawyers. "The amount of the allowance," he proceeds to say, "makes a great difference. If you could get three or four hundred (I think you ought to have the latter sum), the arrangement might do tolerably well. But they are very advantageous terms for him, and should not be agreed to, except for something approaching to an equivalent. I think he should secure your income beyond his own life, upon any property which he may have. I have never mentioned money to you, and I hardly like to do it now, your feelings have been so galled that they have naturally become very sore and sensitive, and I knew not how you might take it. I have had at

times a great mind to send you some, but I feared to do so. As I trust we are now upon terms of confidential and affectionate friendship, I venture to say that you have nothing to do but to express a wish and it shall be instantly complied with.

"I miss you. I miss your society and conversation every day at the hours at which I was accustomed to enjoy them, and when you say that your place can easily be supplied, you indulge in a little vanity and self-conceit. You know well enough that there is nobody who can fill your place.

"I saw Brinsley and his wife the other night at Lord Hertford's. I thought him rather cold. None of them seem really glad to see me except Charlie. But there is no reason they should be. If they went upon my principle (or rather my practice) of disliking those who cause me trouble, uneasiness, vexation, without considering why they do it, they certainly would not rejoice in my presence.

"You are quite right, and it shows your good sense, to bear in mind that it may be of permanent disadvantage to your children to be separated and estranged from their father's family, upon whom they must principally depend. I expect that some day or another you will have them all thrown upon you,—Adieu,

"Yours,

"MELBOURNE."

Previously to the trial Mrs. Norton had been

strongly urged by many of her friends to be beforehand with Norton and sue him for a divorce, whilst he was preparing to accuse her. Others who were equally anxious for her welfare implored her to wait, to have patience, to depend on the truth being shown in court. Undecided which advice to follow, she had submitted her case to a famous lawyer, Dr. Stephen Lushington, who had been consulted by Lady Byron regarding her separation from her lord, and who had been one of the counsel employed to defend Queen Caroline in the divorce proceedings taken against her by George IV. Dr. Lushington's advice to Mrs. Norton was to remain passive and submissive. "I did so, sore against my will," said she.

When, however, the trial was over she consulted her lawyers as to whether she could obtain a divorce on account of the cruelty she had suffered from her husband, laying before them certain instances of ill-usage, violence, and injustice, but was told she could not plead cruelty which she had forgiven, for by returning to Norton after his attempted strangulation she had condoned all she complained of.

"I learned too," she writes, "the law as to my children, that the right was with the father; that neither my innocence nor his guilt can alter it; that not even his giving them into the hands of a mistress, would give me any claim to their custody. The eldest was but six years old, the second four, the youngest two and a half, when we were parted. I

wrote therefore, and petitioned the father and husband in whose power I was, for leave to see them—for leave to keep them, till they were a little older. Mr. Norton's answer was that I should not have them; that if I wanted to see them, I might have an interview with them at the chambers of his attorney. I refused and wrote as follows to my solicitor, who had conveyed his decision to me :—

“However bitter it may be to me, I must decline seeing my children in the manner proposed. I say nothing of the harshness, the inhumanity of telling me I must either see them at the chambers of his solicitor, or not at all; but I must say it is not decent that the father of those children should force me, their mother, out of the very tenderness I bear them, to visit them at the chamber of the attorney who collected the evidence, examined the witnesses, and conducted the proceedings for the intended divorce. I say it is not decent—nay, that even if I were guilty, it would not be decent to make me such a proposal.

“But I am innocent—I have been pronounced innocent by a jury of my countrymen—I have been solemnly and publicly declared innocent by the nobleman against whom that ill-advised action was brought. Why then are my children kept from me; from me whom even their own witnesses proved to be a careful and devoted mother? Mr. Norton says the law gives him my children. I know it does, but the law does no more; it does not compel

me to endure more than separation from them ; and sooner than allow them to connect my visits in their memory with secrecy and shame, I would submit never again to behold them till they were of an age to visit me without asking permission of any human being."

Writing years later she says : " What I suffered on my children's account, none will ever know or measure. The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and God knew mine. The days and nights of tears and anguish that grew into the struggle of years, it is even now a pain to me to look back upon ; even now the hot agony of resentment and grief rises in my mind when I think of the needless tyranny I endured in this respect.

" Mr. Norton held my children as hostages ; he felt that while he had them, he still had a power over me that nothing could control. Baffled in the matter of the trial and damages, he had still the power to do more than punish—to torture—the wife who had been so anxious to part from him. I never saw them, I seldom knew where they were. Once, when I wrote to ask after them in illness, my letter to the nurse (which contained no syllable of offence, or beyond the subject of my inquiry) was turned inside out and franked back to me. I appealed to my mother-in-law, with whom I heard my husband meant to place them, entreating her to refuse to take them, which she promised to do, and heard me with tears of sympathy. But my husband's sister, Lady

Menzies, decided differently ; to her, on payment of so much a head, my three children were consigned and removed to Scotland, where neither their father nor I could be with them. There, with one whom I knew to be haughty and intemperate, those children were left, who had hitherto been so gently and tenderly treated ; and the eldest of whom was delicate in health, sensitive in disposition, and just recovering from illness.

“The first step she made in their education, was to flog this very child (a child of six years old) for merely receiving and reading a letter from me, I being in England and he in Scotland, to impress on his memory that he was not to receive letters from me. Having occasion to correct one still younger, she stripped it naked, tied it to the bedpost and chastised it with a riding whip. These boys having been the gleam of happiness and compensation in my home, it was not to be supposed I would give them up without a struggle, because it was so ‘written in the bond’ of the English law.”

It was probably owing to this struggle, that some twelve months after the trial, Mrs. Norton suddenly received what she describes as “a most extraordinary note” from her husband, stating that he considered all their differences capable of adjustment, and requesting that she would meet him alone in an unoccupied house in Berkeley Square. His letter was signed “Greenacre,” that being the name of a scoundrel who had recently been hanged for enticing a woman

to his house on the promise of marriage and then murdering and cutting her to pieces. The distrust and terror with which Mrs. Norton received this communication was increased by the impatience shown by its writer for an answer, for which he sent twice in the course of an afternoon. As eventually she refused to keep this appointment, he wrote to tell her "nothing could be effected without mutual confidence," and as he could not call at her uncle's house, with whom she was staying, he entreated her to meet him at his own residence ; to which she consented. When they met he besought her to forget the past and return home, he laid the blame of all that had happened on his friends and advisers, declared that the trial was against his will and judgment, and that he longed to take her to his heart once more. Anxious at all hazards to have her children again in her possession, she did not decline to return to him ; and on her leaving, a correspondence was begun between them, from which it was hoped peace would result.

Writing of this portion of her life, Mrs. Norton said : "I am but a woman, and not even a very resolute woman. My husband is welcome to the triumph of knowing that through the long years of our separation, especially during the first four years, I wavered and wept ; that pride and bitter anger have not always been uppermost ; that there have been hundreds of dreary evenings and hopeless mornings, when even his home seemed to me better

than no home ; even his protection better than no protection ; and all the thorns that can cumber a woman's natural destiny, better than the unnatural position of a separated wife. He is welcome to the triumph of knowing that it is impossible to have felt more keenly than I did, the confused degradation of my position ; not in the society where I am received (less there, because there my story was known best), but in other classes which I have said I do not less respect. I was too unlike his picture of me to be otherwise than miserable ; often willing to make a raft out of a wreck, and so drift back even to a comfortless haven. There were moments too when I pitied him, when I believed his story of loneliness and repentance, and forgave without reservation as I had forgiven already." However, before any decided step could be taken towards reconciliation, Norton in one of his sudden outbursts of anger complained that she had said to his sister, she would go back to him merely for sake of her boys and her own reputation, but that she would never consent to live with him again ; on which all treaties were broken off, and he inserted a notice in the morning papers stating that as on March 30th, 1836, his wife had left her home and her family, and from thenceforth had continued to live separate and apart from him, he would no longer be responsible for any debts contracted by her.

Naturally furious at this fresh indignity coming at a moment least expected, she consulted her solicitor

as to whether she was compelled to bear such an outrage, and showed him the letters full of expressions of affection which Norton had recently written. In answer she was assured she had no remedy. "The law can do nothing for you," said her adviser; "your case is one of singular, of incredible hardship; but there is no possible way in which the law could assist you." Her brother, however, immediately inserted a notice in the press, saying that "the whole of the statements contained in Mr. Norton's advertisement were false"—a charge of lying that was left uncontradicted and unchallenged.

After a silence of some weeks, Norton wrote once more to his wife, saying that he desired an arbitration in their affairs, and had selected Sir John Bayley to conduct it. This able lawyer, who had been one of Norton's counsel, undertook, as he subsequently wrote to the press, "the arduous and thankless office of arbitrator, providing that Mrs. Norton would permit me to act in that capacity on her behalf. I did not expect that she would ever consent to this, from the position I had held as counsel for her husband, and the impression she necessarily must have entertained, that I was prejudiced against her. To her honour and credit, however, she at once acceded to Mr. Norton's request; I received both from her and her husband, written assurances that they would abide by my decision, whatever it might be, and on these terms I entered on my difficult task."

Previously Sir John had freely accepted Norton's

statements regarding his domestic affairs, in the firm belief that every assertion he made was true and capable of proof, but he now for the first time learned the wife's side of the question. "I found," wrote Sir John, "not from her assertions, but by the documentary proofs in her possession, that I had been advising Mr. Norton, not on his real case, but on a series of invented fables which he had strung together and consulted me upon. Nearly every statement he had made to me, turned out to be untrue. I found Mrs. Norton anxious only on one point, and nearly broken-hearted about it ; namely the restoration of her children. She treated her pecuniary affairs as a matter of perfect indifference and left me to arrange them with Mr. Norton as I thought fit.

"I found her husband on the contrary anxious only about the pecuniary part of the arrangement, and so obviously making the love of the mother for her offspring a means of barter and bargain, that I wrote to him I could be 'no party to any arrangement which made money the price of Mrs. Norton's fair and honourable access to her children.' I found his history of her expenses and extravagance to be untrue ; and that even while he made that complaint he had detained all her wardrobe, jewellery, and books, in short, every article of her personal property, under threat of selling them. I advised that these things should be given up ; but Mr. Norton would not consent to do so. I told him frankly, I did not think he ought ever to have retained them. I

found Mrs. Norton had offered to pay her own bills, and that Mr. Norton's solicitor had replied that there was no undertaking, even if she did pay her bills, that her property should be returned to her. I found, under Mr. Norton's own handwriting, confessions of the grossest personal violence towards his wife; and that on one occasion he had kicked the drawing-room door from its hinges, and dragged her out of the room by force—she being then enceinte of her youngest son. I wrote to him to say that in spite of these injuries (supported by the clearest proof under his own handwriting), I found Mrs. Norton 'reasonable'—'tractable'—'very forbearing'; indeed, in her expressions towards him 'anxious to satisfy him, for the children's sake'; writing to me, instead of abusing him, that she desired heartily, vainly and sorrowfully, to be at peace with her children's father. I found that the taking away of those children had been the real ground of quarrel, and that not only Mr. Norton threw the blame of the subsequent trial on his advisers, and declared that the trial was brought 'against his judgment,' but that one of his angriest grounds of complaint against his wife was that she had said she 'never would return to him'; that as he expressed it, she did not 'honestly intend to return to him,' when he asked her; that his sister and other friends had told him so; in answer to which complaint I wrote him word that Mrs. Norton did intend to have returned but admitted she had said to his sister,

‘It would be for her children’s sake.’ I found even while making this angry complaint and while endeavouring to come to terms, he retained certain pocket books and MS. memoranda of Mrs. Norton’s, in case, if the negotiations went off, he might find in these journals something on which to ground some accusation against her, in the ecclesiastical or other courts. I read with amazement the series of letters which Mr. Norton had previously addressed to his wife and in which he signs himself ‘Greenacre.’ I showed those letters to the late Lord Wynford. I said, if Mrs. Norton had been my sister, I would have made them public: and I consider she showed great forbearance and consideration in not making them public, when Mr. Norton advertised her in the papers. Mr. Norton admitted to me his firm belief of his wife’s innocence of the charge he had brought against her and Lord Melbourne; and these letters of his expressly exculpated her from all blame, and endearingly entreated her to return and live with him again.

“I then certainly changed my opinion. I thought Mr. Norton had done his wife the most cruel injury a man could inflict, and that he was bound to make every sacrifice and reparation in his power. I saw no earthly reason why her children should be withheld from her, and required him to write immediately to Scotland (where the children then were) to have them sent to London forthwith. In my presence and at my dictation he wrote a letter to that effect and sealed

it. I posted it myself and thought all was settled, as the sole stipulation made by Mrs. Norton was the return of her children ; but Mr. Norton was base enough to write a second letter unknown to me to forbid their coming, and come they did not. As soon as I discovered this act of treachery and breach of faith, I threw up my office of mediator.

"I remonstrated in severe terms with Mr. Norton, and my intercourse with him ceased. The question of Mrs. Norton's allowance was not entered upon, as my interference terminated at this point.

"I deem it, however, the simplest justice to Mrs. Norton to say, that I found her frank and straightforward throughout, acting strictly up to this sentence in her first letter to me—'Heartily and as God is my judge, I desire to make what peace is possible between me and my husband, in spite of the past.' She left her interests entirely in my hands ; threw no obstacle in my path ; and never once swerved from the promise to abide by whatever terms I should lay down. With Mr. Norton (though he had appointed me to act) I found the exact reverse. He abused his wife and his wife's family ; he shuffled about the mis-statements he could not deny ; he would be bound neither by his verbal promise nor his written pledge, and after a correspondence which began in November and did not end till January, all effort at arrangement was given up. On a calm review of these circumstances, it can scarcely be wondered at that I utterly changed my opinion, and that the advice I gave to the writer of

the Greenacre letters in 1837 was not the same advice I had given to the supposed injured husband of 1836."

In conclusion, he believed there never was a more deeply injured woman than Mrs. Norton, "and his conduct to her certainly has been marked by the grossest cruelty, injustice, and inconsistency that ever any man displayed."

Before ending this tragic chapter of wrongs forced on a helpless woman by a degraded man, her legal lord, her remorseless tyrant, a few sentences from a communication addressed to a friend, four months after the trial, will give some glimpses of her inmost self. Beginning by saying that the heart would be very cold and proud that would take amiss the observations her correspondent had made, even if they were less stamped with the truth of religion, she adds that she has already felt their force in her soul; and if she had not expressed her convictions, it was partly because her letters were filled with sorrowful complaints and explanations, and partly because the habits of a worldly life made her reluctant to affirm as her sentiments, that which must appear a strong contrast to her actions.

"Even when living flattered in my own set (that narrow circle of which I think Madame de Staël says that 'they stand round us, and hide the rest of the world') I had many things to remind me of holier and higher objects; and you do not know how very little all the admiration or court which can be paid, can make up for unhappiness at home.

Many and many a night have I gone out, to prove that I could go always to such and such places, and laughed restlessly after I got there, to prove mortification and sorrow could not reach me, when I could have laid my head on my hands and heard no more of what was going on than one hears in the vague murmurs of a waterfall. Many nights, especially in the last year since my great break with my husband, I give you my word that I have been unable to collect myself to answer to the purpose those who addressed me ; and I have felt so irritable at the consciousness that I could not, and so afraid of the sneering smile which I thought I perceived now and then on the faces of my acquaintances, that I have gone away almost immediately after arriving, unfit and unable to go through my evening's pleasure."

"It is impossible to have felt all this, and not also to have felt occasionally a remorse for wasted time and all the wasted energies of life ; and it is against my better thoughts and not my worse, that I have had most to struggle. I have felt and said to myself : 'Surely this is an irrational un-Christian, miserable way of passing one's life.' And then again arose vanity and whispered : 'If you do not go here and there it will only be supposed you were not asked.' And then the false aims and multitude of small ends to be compassed. Oh, depend upon it, there is no treadmill like the life of a woman of the world, and you see it in the expression of the face. It is not late hours that bring the faded, anxious

restless look ; on the contrary I believe you might sit up till morning, singing till the lark interrupted you, and be none the worse. It is the perpetual struggle to be and to do, and the eternal and continual dissatisfaction with all one is and does, that eats away the freshness of life."

After much strife and suffering an arrangement was made that permitted Mrs. Norton to have her boys with her during their holidays ; but she was never reconciled to her husband, who lived until February 1875. Two years later, in March 1877, his widow became the wife of Sir William Sterling Maxwell of Keir, but only survived her marriage for three months.

It may be mentioned here that the year 1836 did not end without bringing an additional grief to Lord Melbourne. His son, who had grown to be a handsome man, had remained mentally a child. Gentle, passive, and obedient he spent his days in silence, sometimes playing cards, reading, or listening to music. Amid all the cares of state, the private worries that beset him, the prime minister spent part of every day in striving to rouse his son's interest, to amuse and cheer him. The fits from which Augustus had suffered through life, now became more frequent and violent, so that the doctors ordered that attendants should always remain with him. Mrs. Norton says that she had often seen Lord Melbourne in his own house pause in the middle of a conversation and remain for some moments listening for some sound from the

adjoining room where he had left the invalid, as if he dreaded his being alone.

For this reason he spent as much time as possible with him in the evenings as well as in the mornings, much to the gratification of Augustus; and on one of these, late in November 1836, whilst the outside world was full of gloom, the prime minister, heavy with forebodings, sat writing letters as his son lay on a sofa close by. "He had been reading," relates Lord Melbourne, "but I thought he dropped asleep. Suddenly he said to me in a quiet and reflective tone : 'I wish you would give me some franks, that I may write and thank people who have been kind in their inquiries.' The pen dropped from my hand as if I had been struck, for the words and the manner were as clear and thoughtful as if no cloud had ever hung heavily over him. I cannot give any notion of what I felt ; for I believed it to be as it proved the summons they call the lightning before death. In a few hours he was gone."

Lord Melbourne dying without issue in 1848 was succeeded in his title and estates by his brother Frederick James Lamb ; who also died childless, when the title became extinct. Their only surviving sister, Emily Mary, wife of the fifth Earl Cowper, and after his death of the third Lord Palmerston, succeeded to the Melbourne estates, which in turn were inherited by her eldest son, the sixth Lord Cowper.

CHAPTER VI

Some notable Players in the Sailor King's Reign—Charles Young says farewell to the Stage—Fanny Kemble goes to America—Edmund Kean's last Days—Charles Kean and Ellen Tree—William Macready as a Youthful Manager—First Appearance in London—Comments on his Appearance—Dislike to his Profession—Introduces Plays by Robert Browning, Lytton Bulwer, and Serjeant Talfourd to the Public—The Tragedy of *Ion*—Remarkable First Night—Supper Party after the Play—England's youngest Poet is toasted—Macready asks Browning to write him a Play—Robert Browning as a Youth—Uncertainty regarding his Vocation—Determined to conquer Fame—Macready's Admiration of him—New Year's Eve at Elstree—Browning's Tragedy is accepted—Macready's Opinion of it—The First Production—Macready's First Meeting with Bulwer—His First Attempt at Dramatic writing—High Opinion of his own Work—Failure of Louise de la Vallière—Sheridan Knowles—A Man of many Callings—Writes for the Stage—Production of the *Hunchback*

CHAPTER VI

THOUGH the court seldom patronised the stage, yet the drama flourished during this brief reign, and the players counted among their ranks many whose names shine with the glory of the footlights from out the history of the past. Mrs. Siddons, fretting under the dull inaction of retirement, mindful—as evening came and silence instead of plaudits filled her ears—of the thrilling hours of her supreme successes, lived until June 1831, when, heavy with the weight of years, she said farewell to the world. Her brother, John Philip Kemble, had been laid to rest in 1823; and one who proudly acknowledged himself a disciple of this elegant specimen of the ponderous, Charles Young, a precise pedantic person whose desires tended towards dignity, whose panting eagerness for respectability found proud satisfaction when his son entered the church, said farewell to the boards at Covent Garden theatre on the 30th of May, 1832.

A temporary leave-taking of the English stage which moved the public far more was that of Fanny

Kemble, which was made in the following month. The interest created by her appearance on the boards under circumstances that won the public sympathy and patronage, had for the first year or two, prevented ruin from falling on Covent Garden theatre ; but the novelty of her performances passing away, without being replaced by striking talents, her father was once more face to face with misfortune. It was then settled that he and his daughter should visit America, to which country then, as now, English actors eagerly turned in the hope of reaping golden harvests.

On the evening of June 22nd, 1832, Fanny Kemble made her final appearance on the stage of this theatre, which was entirely burnt in 1856. The play selected for the occasion was Sheridan Knowles' *Hunchback*. When the curtain fell on the last act a vast emotional audience summoned her and her father before them, when hats and handkerchiefs were waved, cheers filled the air, and words of affection were shouted above the din. As the young girl glanced round the familiar house with its thousands of excited faces turned towards her, she was deeply touched at parting from those kind patrons who were as old friends, and acting on impulse, she snatched from her sash a little nosegay and flung it into the pit together with handfuls of kisses as token of her love and gratitude. Then, no longer able to keep back the blinding tears, she rushed from the stage and in another moment was sobbing bitterly, surrounded by a little band of sympathisers who grasped her



After the picture by C. F. Tayler of Bath.

MISS FANNY KEMBLE.

[To face p. 488,

hands, and with husky voices spoke words of hope and cheer. Her tour in America lasted for two years and ended in Philadelphia, where on June 7th, 1834, she became the wife of Mr. Pierce Butler.

A farewell made under far sadder circumstances was that of Edmund Kean, which took place on March 25th, 1833. Worn out by the hardships of his earlier days and the dissipations of his later years, this man, probably the greatest genius the English stage has seen, was forced by his own extravagance to fret his hours of sickness and gloom on the boards; until bloated and blear eyed, with failing limbs, gasping breath, and distraught brain, he finally broke down and was carried from the pitiful eyes of his indulgent audience.

His son Charles, who was in his twenty-third year when misfortune finally overtook his father, inherited none of his parent's genius: and even lacked many of the qualities necessary to a successful actor. For all that, making the best of such poor gifts as nature gave him, he was now courageously fighting for the popularity to which his name recommended him. In this struggle he was greatly helped by Ellen Tree, a young girl six years his junior, who, Irish by birth, inherited as her right that brilliant and dangerous gift of acting, which in one or other of life's social phases is generally exercised by the Celt. Since her seventeenth year she had been playing at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and among other parts had taken that of Romeo to the Juliet of Fanny

Kemble. As however, he gained little success on the London stage at this point of his career, Charles Kean took a company which included Ellen Tree, who subsequently became his wife, to Hamburg, where he was already favourably known, and afterwards toured through Scotland ; but was not seen in London during the remainder of this reign.

Helen Faucit, who was descended on both sides from families of players, did not make her first appearance on the London stage until January 1836 ; so that the most prominent figure on the boards whilst the Sailor King sat on the throne was that of William Charles Macready. His father who was originally an upholsterer in Dublin, turned player, emigrated to England, and became a theatrical manager, whose companies toured the northern districts. Bustling, sharp-tempered, speculative, and sanguine, frosty faced under a scratch wig, he was at first cheered by success, which presently mounted to ambition ; when his great desire became to see his eldest born son a shining light at the Bar ; and his second son an officer in the army. With this purpose in view, William was sent to Rugby, where he remained three years. About the end of that time, debt led the elder Macready straight to Lancaster Castle, which had fallen to the base uses of a prison. William, a lad of sixteen summers was then sent to Chester to take charge of his father's ragged company, who were in a state of mutiny because their salaries were unpaid. The dauntless courage of youth, undamped by experience, led the new manager

to take command of them, to insist on careful rehearsals, the use of the proper text, and the virtues of personal endeavours, when he managed to fill the house nightly, and to satisfy all claims.

Such a beginning merited success, and soon he was able to send his father three pounds a week for his support, and eventually to release him. The Bar was by this time lost sight of and the stage accepted as a readier, if less respectable means of gaining money. At seventeen William Macready played Romeo to the Juliet of a ranting matron, scant of breath, obese, and the mother of seven sons. Later he acted with Mrs. Siddons when on her way to give farewell performances at Edinburgh, who, in those tones of tragedy that made commonplaces sound like utterances of an oracle, advised him "to study well and keep his mind on his art," and prayed that God might bless him. Subsequently he had the advantage of performing with Mrs. Jordan, who in a voice the most melodious he had ever heard, taught him the business of the scenes in which she appeared with him. It was only after long years of experience and practice in the country, where he drew high salaries and large audiences, that in fear and trembling he ventured to appear before a London public; and was engaged as a member of the Covent Garden company for five years, at the rate of sixteen pounds a week for two years, seventeen pounds a week for the following two years, and eighteen pounds a weeks for the last year.

On September 16th, 1816, he made his first

appearance in the capital, as Orestes in the *Distressed Mother*. Fear seized him, his limbs trembled, his breath came quick, his throat was parched, and his demeanour showed a surprising absence of that bland self-assurance which sustains and damns mediocrity. As a result he won the enthusiastic admiration of a crowded house whose plaudits were led by Edmund Kean, a man generous enough to appreciate this new candidate for popularity. Though generally praised by the press, some of its remarks must have been galling to one who was particularly sensitive, if not vain; and it is doubtful if the assurances that he was "a man of mind," and "by far the best tragic actor with the exception of Edmund Kean," were not more than counterbalanced by statements made by the *Times*, that "he is not handsome in face or person"; by the *Globe*, that tragedy required "features of a more prominent and strongly marked description than those he possesses," or by the *News* that declared he was "the plainest and most awkwardly made man that ever trod the stage."

A portrait of this actor, who was to hold the most prominent position on the English stage for many years, is given by James Henry Hacket, who describes him as being above the middle height "his port rather stiffly erect, his figure not stout but very straight, and at his hips quite the reverse of embonpoint. His ordinary or natural gait is not dignified, he steps short and quick, with a springy action of the knee-joints which, sometimes trundling his stiff bust—as in a

rush from the centre to the corner of the stage—reminds one of the recoil of a cannon upon its carriage. In his slow and measured tread of the stage he seems somewhat affected ; he sways his body alternately on either leg, whilst his head waves from side to side to balance it.”

That his intellectual qualities triumphed over his personal defects, in a calling where above all others a handsome presence and graceful bearing are valuable, tends to his greater credit. The secret of this success lay in tireless study, in scrupulous care for all that concerned his art, and in the fact that he was never satisfied to rest upon success, but ever eager to increase it by fresh efforts. The day previous to his appearance in an important part was spent as far as possible in solitude, whilst he strove to identify himself with its characteristics, and to realise the action, expression, and intonation suiting each speech. When possible, as when starring in provincial theatres, he sought to drill and teach those who were to appear in the scenes with himself : a task that created surprise in days when slovenly rehearsals were general. Imaginative and sensitive, he was readily disturbed by incongruities and mistakes on the stage ; as once, when playing Macbeth at Canterbury, in January 1834, one of the murderers entered, wrapped in an old tattered cloak, only suitable to Mad Tom, which had such an effect upon Macready that, as he says, “I could not look at the audience, and was obliged to slur the scene ; at any rate, my nerves quite failed

me. I feel ashamed of the professional relationship between us, I cannot subdue it; and money is bought dearly by the pain I suffer under operations of this sort."

Another more amusing incident disturbed him when he was playing Werner in Dublin, two months later. "I was inconvenienced," he writes in his diary, "and rather annoyed by Ulric looking on the ground, or anywhere but in my face, as he should have done; my displeasure, however, vanished on seeing the tears fast trickling down his cheek, and, forgiving his inaccuracy on the score of his sensibility, I continued the scene with augmented energy and feeling, and left it with a very favourable impression of the young man's judgment and warm-heartedness. In the course of the play he accosted me, begging my pardon for his apparent inattention to me, and explaining the cause—viz., that he had painted his face so high on the cheek, that the colour had got into his eyes, and kept them running during the whole act. What an unfortunate disclosure."

Rigidly conscientious, Macready took all things, including himself, with a seriousness almost sacred; and his social respectability as an exemplary husband and devoted father—rare virtues in those of his calling—awoke a reverent admiration in his heart. To all his manner had an air of what he would have described as classic dignity, but which the less appreciative found pompous. Like Fanny Kemble he had little affection for his profession; seldom

associating with its members ; finding from the beginning the conversation of the green-room "of a puerile and uninteresting character, and not unfrequently objectionable on other grounds" ; and longing for "some mode of escape from this distasteful and unpromising pursuit, and exchange for one of greater utility." For the ambition which had swayed his father before the bailiffs laid him by the heels developed itself in the son in pitiful desires to sit at the tables of great men and rub shoulders with titles ; a greed of honour considered monstrous in days before those of his calling had condescended to air their importance in the drawing-rooms of an amazed and amused aristocracy.

Setting aside such weaknesses—harmless indeed beside those blotching the great bulk of humanity—he was in all ways estimable. Harriet Martineau, a shrewd observer, who bears testimony to his learning, accomplishments, chivalrous spirit, "unsleeping domestic tenderness and social beneficence," says he was a delightful companion. "The Kembles were of a different sort altogether," she adds ; "I mean Charles Kemble and his daughters. They were full of knowledge and accomplishment, of course ; but there seemed to me to be an incurable vulgarity clinging to them, among all the charms of their genius, their cultivation, and their social privileges. I think it must have been from their passionate natures, and from their rather priding themselves on that characteristic of theirs. There was a green-room cast of

mind about them all, from which Macready was marvellously free. He saw life by daylight, and they by stage lamps ; and that was the difference."

To Macready is due the merit of introducing to the stage Lytton Bulwer, Robert Browning, and Thomas Noon Talfourd, whose plays, together with those of Sheridan Knowles, were the chief theatrical events of this reign. Talfourd's tragedy of *Ion*, which came first in precedence, was the work of a serjeant-at-law in the maturity of his thirty-eighth year. The son of one who, as a prosperous brewer and a stern dissenter may be said to have held out a hand to heaven and to earth, young Talfourd was not permitted to read the profane plays of William Shakespeare or his successors ; but was encouraged to form his ideas of this world and the next on the dreary meanderings of Hannah More's "Sacred Dramas." While his imagination was discoloured by these, and his years numbered seventeen, he published a volume of "Poems on Various Subjects," written "to advance the cause of religion and morality."

Law being selected for him as a profession, he was sent from his native town of Reading to London, that he might read with Mr. Justice Chitty. Release from a domestic circle governed by unlovely sternness was celebrated by an early visit to Covent Garden theatre, where he saw John Kemble, statuesque not only in appearance but in his unlikeness to nature. From that time Talfourd's imagination took fire, and his great desire was to write a blank verse tragedy. But

whilst unable to select from the superabundance of subjects that presented themselves, one he thought wholly satisfactory, he found occupation in the less heroic work of dramatic criticism, and in penning essays and reviews for magazines. These brought him to the notice of Charles Lamb, who introduced him to Wordsworth as "my one admirer." His circle of literary acquaintances gradually widening, soon included among others William Godwin, Mrs. Shelley, Samuel Rogers, Macready, Bulwer, Browning, and Monckton Milnes.

At the age of twenty-six Talfourd was called to the Bar, married a wife, and became a pleader ; twelve years later he was made a serjeant-at-law ; and in 1835 was returned as Member of Parliament for Reading. The triumph of his social advancement did not turn him from his ambition to write a blank verse tragedy. The plot, which had long been decided on, represented a youth named Ion who, burning with patriotism and furious with indignation against a despot, vows to slay him. Whilst he rails in interminable periods against autocracy, one less eloquent and more practical despatches the hated tyrant whom Ion only then discovers to have been his father, and realises that, as his heir, hereditary doom has fallen on himself.

The tragedy was printed for private circulation in 1835, but was reviewed in various publications, and with extravagant praise in the *Quarterly*. In May of that year it was read by Macready, who was

“arrested” by the characters as well as “by the very beautiful thoughts and very noble ones with which the play is interspersed.” Later the idea occurred to him of producing it on the stage; and for this purpose he read “Talfourd’s sweet tragic poem” once more, with the intention of reducing and fitting it for the boards. He feared the author would resent the excisions he felt obliged to make, and was relieved to find himself mistaken. The corrected version was read to Talfourd at Macready’s country house at Elstree, after which the poet’s carriage took them to town.

At Macready’s request, Ellen Tree consented to play the part of Clemanthe, the heroine, and the tragedy was announced for performance on May 26th, 1836; which happened to be the author’s birthday. Interest in a new production, in days when the public, year in and year out, were invited to witness the drowsy stock dramas of their grandfathers, together with Talfourd’s social and professional position, drew an immense and excited audience; the boxes being crowded, and, as at an earlier date, the pit filled with critics and lawyers, whilst the whole house was crammed to the ceiling. Macready who had carefully studied and rehearsed his part, acted the character, as he tells us, “as well as I have ever played any previous one, with more inspiration, more complete abandonment, more infusion of myself into another being, than I have been able to attain in my performances for some time.” From the first the tragedy was received

with hearty signs of approval, and the fall of the curtain was a signal for a stormy outburst of appreciation. Continually called for, Macready came forward and in a few pedantic sentences said: "It would be affectation to conceal the peculiar pleasure in receiving their congratulatory compliment on this occasion. It was indeed most gratifying to me. The grateful recollection of their kindness would never leave me."

He had no sooner gone back to his room than Talfourd rushed in, shook hands with and heartily thanked him. "He said something about Mr. Wallack (the manager) wishing him to go on the stage, as they were calling, but it would not be right. I said: 'On no account in the world.' He shortly left me, and as I heard, was made to go forward to the front of his box, and receive the enthusiastic tribute of the house's grateful delight. How happy he must have been."

No sooner was Covent Garden Theatre emptied of its teeming thousands than a number of artists, actors, authors, poets, and lawyers hurried to Talfourd's house, where they were bidden to supper. There, in the drawing-room, noisy with exuberant congratulations were, among others, Walter Savage Landor, his superb head shaggy and lion-like, a stream of irrepressible words flowing from his lips; William Wordsworth, grave and ponderous; Mary Russell Mitford, who had written tragedies in which Charles Kemble, Charles Young, and Macready had appeared

as the heroes ; John Forster, the friend of Charles Dickens ; Ellen Tree, to whom a great share of the evening's success was owing, and who received unstinted praise with modest blushes ; Clarkson Stanfield, the Academician ; and young Robert Browning.

Presently all were seated around ' that splendid board ' as Mrs. Mitford describes the supper-table. Macready who felt tranquilly happy, as he says, " in the splendid assemblage that had graced the occasion ; happy in the triumphant issue of this doubtful experiment ; happy in the sensation of relief that attended the consciousness of its being achieved ; and also happy in having been an agent in the pleasing work of making others happy," was seated between Wordsworth and Landor, with his hostess next but one, and with Robert Browning for his opposite neighbour. John Forster had already told Macready that it was expected he should propose Talfourd's health, which in due time he did, referring in graceful and happy words to the beautiful play they had just witnessed, and to the birthday of its author. In return Talfourd proposed the health of the actor to whom he owed so much ; after which toasts became the order of this memorable night.

To the present generation the most notable of these was " The Poets of England," with which Talfourd, its proposer, after referring to the two illustrious winners of immortal fame who had honoured him in becoming his guests, coupled the name of England's youngest poet, Robert Browning. Then,

amidst a sudden hush, this youth of barely twenty summers rose, and with grace and modesty responded in a manner that won all hearts, and elicited from Wordsworth at its conclusion the words, "I am proud to drink your health Mr. Browning." Nor were the honours of the night over for one who was destined to leave the mark of his genius for all time on English literature ; for when this scene, never to be forgotten by those who took part in it had ended, and the guests were departing, Macready came behind him and said : "Write a play, Browning, and keep me from going to America." Turning quickly a face flushed with triumph, Browning answered : "Shall it be historical and English ? What do you say to a drama on Strafford ?" With this suggestion, inspiring and promising as a sunrise, Browning went out into the night, well nigh intoxicated with the hopes surging in his brain, whilst Macready with his wife and daughter drove to Elstree, "talking of nothing but the evening's events—this happy evening. We reached home about two," he says, "and went to bed with the birds singing their morning song in our tired ears. Thank God."

The success of *Ion*, tested at a benefit for Macready, was so great that the impoverished management eagerly desired it should be repeated, and Helen Faucit, a member of the Covent Garden company was requested to play Clemanthe ; a part which she thought, from seeing its first performance, gave few opportunities to an actress. Though the terms of her agreement

allowed her to refuse such representations as she considered unsuitable, she consented to act the heroine as a concession to Macready, with whom she had little sympathy. Their first acquaintance had been made in the early part of the month, when she rehearsed Mrs. Haller, in *The Stranger*, with him. At its conclusion he offered her his congratulations; "but with all this," she wrote in her journal, quoted in Sir Theodore Martin's "Life of Helen Faucit," "I feel very much afraid of him; there is something so cold, and distant, and almost repulsive in his manner. I don't think I shall ever like him."

Time did not alter these impressions; for speaking of the rehearsal of her scenes in *Ion* with him, she says in her journal: "How foolish it is of me to feel so much afraid of Mr. Macready. My voice actually trembled this morning in going through my scenes. I know I always feel stupidly nervous and diffident with strangers, but there is something about Mr. Macready that is quite awful. I wonder if I shall ever get over this silly feeling. I fear not; for I think, if I may judge from the freezing and proud coldness of his manner, he dislikes me, and if so he is not likely to be more agreeable in my eyes. I am sorry I should feel so towards him, for I most warmly admire and appreciate his great talents as an actor, and also everything I have heard of his character as a man. I don't yet like him, nor do I think I ever can. Still there is something about him that commands one's respect, and I should say it would be

impossible for him to commit any act that would be derogatory to the high character of a gentleman. So much for Mr. Macready. My stars, how I have been scribbling about him."

With Helen Faucit as the heroine, *Ion* was played several times during the season, and afterwards took its dull respectable place among the stock pieces the town was invited to witness. Almost immediately after its first success, an attempt was made to produce something more fresh and vigorous than the stage had at this time seen by Robert Browning, for whom, from an early date in his life, fame had been predicted. An only son, one of two children of his parents, he was born on May 7th, 1812, at Camberwell; his mother being a woman of clear perceptions, gentleness, and fine sympathies; his father—who held a clerkship in the Bank of England—a scholarly man, with tastes for the arts of painting and music, and a talent for writing polished verse. Fortunately for their children he was in a position to render them independent to their personal exertions. According to his thinking, neither a public school nor a University was desirable for his son, who was therefore educated at home, where he also learned such accomplishments as music, drawing, riding, dancing, and boxing. Later he was sent to a private academy.

Amazingly precocious, the boy devoured the authors in his father's library, especially the poets; and at the age of twelve had produced a volume of manuscript verse which he named "Incondita,"

and with the courage of inexperience offered it to several unappreciative publishers. The results of disappointments and the passage of three years inclined him to think his talents lay in musical composition, and he wrote settings for songs; but not quite certain on this point, he fancied he might win distinction as an artist. That he decided to become a poet resulted from his reading and becoming fascinated by the works of Shelley and Keats, which his adoring mother had bought for him at a time when these singers were scarcely known and almost wholly unappreciated by their countrymen. And it is probable that the intention of becoming like unto them influenced his mind, when on being asked by his father what profession he should adopt, the lad replied he thought it wiser "to see life in the best sense, and cultivate the powers of the mind, than to shackle himself in the very outset of his career by a laborious training foreign to that aim." "In short, Robert, your design is to be a poet?" said the elder Browning, who was told that his surmise was correct.

With a wisdom rare in parents, opposition was not raised against this desire; his father being sagacious enough to see the direction in which the lad's talents lay. He was rewarded when in the latter part of 1832 his son, then in his nineteenth year, wrote *Pauline*, which he afterwards describes as his earliest attempt at dramatic poetry. Hearing that he had written a fine poem, which she desired

to see in print, his aunt Mrs. Silverthorn, offered to defray the expenses of its publication, and accordingly it was brought out in January 1833, by Saunders and Otley.

This slender volume of blank verse, issued anonymously, with a couple of exceptions was slighted and damned, but gained an immediate and appreciative notice from William Johnson Fox, an uncompromising radical, a Unitarian clergyman, and the editor of the *Monthly Repository*. Later, it is interesting to know, it brought him a letter from one "personally and altogether unknown" to him, signed Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who said that whilst reading in the British Museum library he had come upon *Pauline* which he thought must have been written by Browning, but not being sure, wrote to enquire if his surmise were correct.

The winter of 1833 was spent by Browning in Russia; the spring of the following year in Italy; and in 1835, about the time when the family moved from Camberwell to Hatcham, "*Paracelsus*," the first poem to bear his name, was published at his father's expense. Gratifying to both must have been the statement made in the *New Monthly Magazine*, that its author was a man of genius, who had in himself all the elements of a great poet, philosophical as well as dramatic; and not less welcome the warm praise it won from friends, and the place it gained him among the distinguished writers of his day. In appearance he was at this time slim and dark, his

deep brown hair falling to his shoulders in curls, his complexion clear, his eyes bright and responsive, his voice singularly sweet, whilst the gestures he frequently used were, like all his movements, touched with grace. An old friend of his, Mrs. Bridell Fox, adds a personal touch in saying he was "just a trifle of a dandy, addicted to lemon-coloured kid gloves and such things; quite the glass of fashion and the mould of form; but full of ambition, eager for success, eager for fame, and what's more, determined to conquer fame and to achieve success." In his conversation Harriet Martineau, who had a friendly feeling for him, declared that no speaker could be "more absolutely clear and purpose-like"; and adds that he was "full of good sense and fine feeling, amidst occasional irritability; full also of fun and harmless satire; with some little affectations which were as droll as anything he said."

It was while dining at Bayswater with his friend William Johnson Fox one evening towards the end of November 1835 that Macready first saw Robert Browning, whom he expressed himself pleased to meet. The first favourable impression made by the young poet's open intellectual face, deepened on hearing his bright suggestive talk; and on both leaving their host, the actor offered to drive his new acquaintance part of his way home. The hope Macready expressed that they might meet again was warmly received, cards were exchanged, and before they parted Browning promised to send the elder man a copy of "Paracelsus."

When Macready had read the poem he declared it "a work of great daring, starred with poetry of thought, feeling, and diction, but occasionally obscure." His final judgment was summed up in the sentence: "The writer can scarcely fail to be a leading spirit of his time."

Anxious that the pleasure the poem afforded him should be shared with others, he gave it to Miss Martineau, who was then staying with his family at Elstree. "I read a canto before going to bed," says she, adding briefly and significantly; "for the first time in my life, I passed a whole night without sleeping a wink." Desiring to see more of Browning, he was invited, together with John Forster, Miss Kenny the actress, Cattermole the painter, and others, by Macready to spend the last day of the old year with him at Elstree. Browning's vivacious conversation and considerate ways made him "very popular with the whole party; his simple and enthusiastic manner engaged attention and won opinions from all present," writes Macready, who adds: "He looks and speaks more like a youthful poet than any man I ever saw."

Early in the new year, 1836, there was some consultation between Browning and Macready about a tragedy having Narses for its subject, which the former thought of writing. "He said that I had *bit* him by my performance of Othello," writes the actor, "and I told him I hoped I should make the blood come. It would indeed be some recompense for the miseries, the humiliations, the heart-sickening disgusts which I

have endured in my profession, if by its exercise I had awakened a spirit of poetry, whose influence would elevate, ennoble, and adorn our degraded drama. May it be."

The subject Browning had selected for his tragedy was not found satisfactory, and none other was suggested until the evening of the first production of *Ion*. That *Strafford* had then been named was probably due to the fact that the poet had largely helped his friend John Forster, at a time when he fell ill, to complete a life of that statesman on which he had been engaged. And no doubt Browning saw in the chief actor of the day, a fitting representative for his hero. That his admiration for Macready was unstinted may be gathered from an entry in the diary of the latter, written on the second morning after his appearance as *Ion*. "Arriving at chambers," he says, "I found a note from Browning. What can I say upon it?" It was a tribute which remunerated me from the annoyances and cares of years ; it was one of the very highest, may I not say the highest, honour I have through life received."

In the summer of 1836 Browning set to work on the tragedy of *Strafford*, having heard from Macready that he could not have hit upon a subject that was more likely to please him. The play was finished in the following March, when Macready read it to his manager, Osbaldiston, who "caught at it with avidity, agreed to produce it without delay on his part, and to give the author twelve pounds per night for twenty-

five nights, and ten pounds per night for ten nights beyond." Alterations were made, and the characters cast: the hero being represented by Macready, Lady Carlisle by Helen Faucit, Charles I. by Dale, who was more noted for his deafness than his talents, and Pym by Vandenhoff, a slovenly though occasionally a virile actor. Little pains were taken to stage the play at a time when Covent Garden theatre was trembling on the brink of ruin; the manager refusing to sanction the slightest expenditure for the occasion; "not a rag for the new tragedy" being his dictum. From this it may be gathered that he had little faith in the play, which on reading he had caught with avidity as likely to help his failing fortunes, but which on rehearsal disappointed him. Something of the same feeling possessed Macready, who had carefully and conscientiously studied his part.

"There is no chance in my opinion for the play but in the acting," he says, "which by possibility might carry it to the end without disapprobation; but that the curtain can fall without considerable opposition, I cannot venture to anticipate under the most advantageous circumstances. In all the historical plays of Shakespeare, the great poet has only introduced such events as act on the individuals concerned, and of which they are themselves a part; the persons are all in direct relation to each other, and the facts are present to the audience. But in Browning's play we have a long scene of passion—upon what? A plan destroyed, by whom or for

what we know not, and a Parliament dissolved, which merely seems to inconvenience Strafford in his arrangements." Nor could Browning find much hope for success. A letter written by his friend Miss Flower, states that he seemed "a good deal annoyed at the go of things behind the scenes, and declares he will never write a play again as long as he lives. You have no idea of the ignorance and obstinacy of the whole set, with here and there an exception; think of his having to write out the meaning of the word impeachment, as some of them thought it meant poaching."

Though Macready was unable to feel or express admiration for any who shared his calling, he ever exhibited a greedy desire for praise, and now found a swelling pleasure in confiding to his diary his gratification in "the extreme delight Browning testified at the rehearsals of my part, which he said, was to him a full recompense for having written the play, inasmuch as he had seen his utmost hopes of character perfectly embodied."

A crowd of the most intellectual men and women of the day assembled in Covent Garden theatre on May 1st, 1837, to witness a play which it was confidently hoped would introduce a new era in the drama. Ears were strained to catch the opening lines which were spoken in a slovenly, almost inaudible manner; and impatience was stirring when Macready made his first entrance and was received with a burst of applause: for here, as the *Examiner* said, "was

the portrait of the great and ill-fated earl, stepping from the living canvas of Vandyke ; the same fixed look, the same severity, the same mournful anxiety, the same eye and brow, the same deep and dauntless resolution, mingled with great sweetness of the mouth." With the clear enunciation of a voice whose whisper was audible in the remotest parts of the house, his words fell distinctly on all ears, though their meaning was not always immediately grasped. But it soon became plain, as the *Times* stated the following day, that the author had discovered the great secret that the language of the drama should be concise and pointed, instead of being diffuse and florid, that declamation should not be introduced merely for sake of displaying poetical beauties ; and that each character should express what he had to say and no more.

According to the *Examiner*, "the play was most infamously got up." Macready was not at his best, "while as for the rest of the performers, with the exception of Miss Faucit, they were a barn's wonder to look at. Mr. Vandenhoff was nauseous, with his whining, drawling, and slouching in Pym, and Mr. Webster whimpered in somewhat too juvenile a fashion through young Vane. Some one should have stepped out of the pit," says John Forster, who wrote this criticism, "and thrust Mr. Dale from the stage. Anything should have been done, rather than that such exhibitions should be allowed to disgrace the stage of the national theatre."

That such disadvantages did not strangle the play

at its birth, remains a wonder. The final curtain fell to sounds of friendly applause ; and those whom the *Chronicle* describes as rioters "were so ill-advised as to call loudly for the author." Whether their intention was to encourage or deride remains unknown ; for Browning refused to face them, and Webster, as stage manager, assured them that the author was not in the house. *Strafford* was then announced for a second performance on the following evening.

The criticisms on the tragedy were in general favourable. The *Examiner*, while believing that it would not take permanent hold of the stage, declared it "the work of a writer who is capable of achieving the highest objects and triumphs of dramatic literature. They are not achieved here, but here they lie in the rough before every reader. *Strafford* suggests the most brilliant career of dramatic authorship which has been known in our time."

The play ran for five nights, when its career was brought to an abrupt end by Vandenhoff's withdrawal from the cast, being lured elsewhere by higher terms. It would be strange if no other and better actor could have been found to replace him, and the supposition suggests itself that the manager considered the production unprofitable.

While filling an engagement in Dublin, in October 1834, Macready was introduced by Colonel D'Aguilar to Lytton Bulwer, whom he found "very good-natured and of course intelligent." In the conversation that

followed the actor urged the novelist to write a play ; when Bulwer stated he had written a drama having Cromwell for its hero, of which the greater part had been lost. In parting he expressed a hope to Macready that they might meet in London. Mindful of this the latter invited him to dinner some months later, and was hurt when it was declined. "One expression in his letter I disliked—the 'honour of my acquaintance.' My acquaintance can be no honour to such a man as Bulwer, and it almost seems like irony," writes Macready, who, superlatively sensitive, and uncertain of his social position, was ever fearful of slights.

It was not until February 1836 that he next mentions Bulwer's name in his diary ; when he called on the novelist at his handsomely furnished chambers in the Albany. Recalling their conversation in Dublin, Bulwer said he had since written a drama on the subject of Louise de la Vallière, but feared it was unworthy of his visitor's powers, as the interest of the plot was centred in the heroine. However, he desired Macready to read it, and promised to make any alterations he might suggest. He then "handed me a paper," writes the latter, "in which I read that it was dedicated to myself. It almost affected me to tears. I could not read it." When he had examined the play, pointed out faults and suggested remedies, terms were discussed ; the author demanding two hundred pounds down and five pounds per night for the following two seasons, after which the copyright should revert to

him. Macready thought this a hard bargain, to which the manager of Drury Lane theatre where he was then playing, would not agree. The latter, Bunn, before coming to a decision wished to read and judge the drama for himself; a reasonable request that Bulwer considered "precisely of that nature which no author of moderate reputation concedes to a publisher": for a writer, says he, "can have but little self respect who does not imagine in any new experiment in literature that no risk can be greater than his own." As Bunn considered himself justified in making this demand, and Bulwer in refusing it, the Duchesse de la Vallière failed to make her appearance on the boards of Drury Lane theatre.

In May 1836 Macready returned to Covent Garden theatre whose manager, David Webster Osbaldiston, accepted Bulwer's play, which in November was read in his room to the company, all of whom seemed pleased with it; "but I cannot place much confidence in them," says Macready. The cast included Helen Faucit, William Farren, Ben Webster, Vandenhoff, and of course Macready, who devoted time and care to the part of Bragelonne, "for without study I can do nothing. I am worse than a common nightly drudge," writes this sensitive player.

On the evening of January 4th, 1837, Covent Garden theatre was crowded with a brilliant audience eager to see the first play of this clever novelist, of which newspapers and gossips had talked for months. Lady Blessington whose beautiful face was framed in

old lace, on whose neck, arms, and hands jewels flashed, sat in a box, her niece beside her, Disraeli, Charles Greville, and John Forster behind her ; an opposite box was occupied by Mrs. Norton, whose Oriental loveliness was contrasted by the dazzling fairness of her sister, Lady Seymour ; Samuel Rogers, bald, wrinkled and shrunken, acting as a foil to both ; while other boxes were filled with the author's friends, among whom were most of the fashionable women and men of the day.

As the curtain rose a hush fell upon all, and strained ears listened with interest. Stimulated by such a house Macready acted with earnestness and freshness, the company, with the exception of Vandenhoff, catching something of his spirit, and all of them being liberally rewarded. "It has never been our lot," says the *Times* of the following day, "to witness a more favourable and indulgent audience. Whenever there was an opportunity for applauding it was seized with zeal, and the house rang again with acclamations. This was the case once or twice in the first and second acts, and again in the fourth and fifth ; but all these vehement and well-intentioned efforts to save the author and themselves would not do ; the drowsy influence prevailed, and at one time we almost expected to see the whole house fast asleep. The curtain, however, did not fall to relieve them until a quarter past eleven, when a strong contest took place between the contents and the non-contents."

At the conclusion Macready and Helen Faucit were

called before the curtain ; and when the former gained his dressing-room he was met by Browning, Talfourd, Edward Fitzgerald, and the author, who warmly thanked him for his performance. And no sooner had he changed than he was carried away to Lady Blessington's, where a brilliant company had been invited to supper to celebrate this event, when speeches were made and healths drunk, and all went merrily till the small hours rang from church tower and steeple above the sleeping city.

Before the second performance of the *Duchesse de la Vallière*, it was liberally pruned, but "the *claqueurs* of the first night being absent, the applause, except in three instances was miserably feeble." The third representation took place before a half-empty house. In all it was played for four consecutive nights, and eight times during the month, after which it was withdrawn, and it was not until the succeeding reign that Bulwer made a decided success as a dramatic writer by the production of the *Lady of Lyons*, *Richelieu*, and *Money*.

The one drama produced while William IV. reigned which has survived to the present day is the *Hunchback* of Sheridan Knowles. A kinsman of the author of the *School for Scandal*, he was the son of a school-master in Cork, who laid claim to learning as the writer of a dictionary. This pedagogue, vain, violent-tempered, and pompous, gave a stepmother to his son when the latter was sixteen, from which time it was made plain to him that his father's roof was

no longer his home. Girding up his loins, the boy crossed the channel and introduced himself to Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who obtained a place for him in the Stamp Office. The duties of his calling were monotonous, if light ; and the youth, restless, imaginative, and imprudent, soon flung it up that he might enlist in the Wiltshire Militia. In turn, soldiering was abandoned for medicine ; but finding he had no vocation for the healing art he resorted to one for which he was even less suited and became a player. As such he strolled through the three kingdoms, strutting his brief hour as lover in doublet and hose, as a villain in cloak and vizard, as a singer between the acts ; appearing on one night in such various parts as Richard III., and as a harlequin ; and on another as the hero in Hannah More's tragedy of *Percy*, and as the monkey in *La Pérouse*.

At the age of thirteen he had written a drama which was played by his father's pupils ; a foreshadowing of future efforts, for he now wrote for a fellow member of his company, Edmund Kean, a play called *Leo, or the Gipsy*. Its success induced him to pen a second drama on the subject of *Brian Boroihme*, which was so highly successful that all rights in it were bought by his manager for five pounds. The occupation of actor and dramatist were next exchanged for that of a schoolmaster, in which he spent thirteen hours daily in weary drudgery. With all its uncertainty regarding salaries, its humiliations, its abiding discomforts, the profession on which he had recently

turned his back seemed blissful in comparison with that of a teacher ; but he had now a family to provide for and the fees of his pupils were welcomed as a guarantee against starvation by those depending on him. But the fascination of the old life was strong upon him ; and if he could not play and teach, at least he could combine the occupation of schoolmaster and dramatist. As a result he wrote the tragedy of *Virginius*, that after the customary disappointments and trials was triumphantly produced by Macready in 1820, and realised for its author four hundred pounds.

Remunerated by a sum that seemed to him munificent, he hurried to indite fresh plays, *Caius Gracchus* and the *Beggar's Daughter*, both of which were failures ; but his sanguine temperament still unclouded, he next set himself to write a comedy called the *Hunchback*. By this time he had exchanged his calling as a schoolmaster for that of a lecturer, which gave him more time for composition. The comedy was approved of by Macready, then at Drury Lane theatre, and accepted by the manager, who gave the author to understand it would be put in rehearsal immediately. A few days later he received a letter stating that it had been found necessary to give another play a prior representation, and that the production of the *Hunchback* must be postponed until the following season.

Indignant at this treatment, Sheridan Knowles demanded his manuscript ; and though the manager

apologised, expostulated, and finally promised to begin rehearsals at once, the author insisted that the play should be returned to him. He then took it to Charles Kemble, who as manager of Covent Garden theatre, accepted a comedy, in whose heroine he believed his daughter Fanny would find a part specially suited to her; an opinion she shared on hearing the play read, though the company at large had grave doubts of its success. April 5th, 1832, was fixed for the first performance, father and daughter appearing in the cast as Julia and Sir Thomas Clifford; whilst the part of Master Walter, at his special desire, was assigned to Sheridan Knowles; as it was believed that an author representing a character in his own comedy, would attract and interest the public.

A dense crowd impatiently called for the rise of the curtain, behind which an anxious company awaited their trial; Charles Kemble—hoping that success might temporarily avert ruin from the theatre and his family, yet fearing that the blow would fall that night—walked backwards and forwards watched by his daughter Fanny, who, sharing his trepidation, was horribly nervous, not only on her own account but on that of Sheridan Knowles, whose proverbial absent-mindedness and irresponsibility she dreaded might lead to some blunder that would provoke ridicule and court disaster. The play began well, was listened to with an attention that gave its interpreters confidence, even the first act being greeted with hearty applause. Re-

assured and encouraged, the actors threw themselves into their parts with heartiness; Knowles being in such a state of exultation throughout the play that Fanny Kemble "followed him about behind the scenes, endeavouring to keep him in his right mind with regard to his exits and his entrances, and receiving from him explosive Irish benedictions in return."

The general applause grew with each act, and when the curtain finally fell the house was in a storm of excitement. Amidst the universal clamour a cry was raised for the author, when that modest little man was unwillingly led forward by Charles Kemble. Again and again Knowles bowed, his agitation visible under the paint on his twitching face, until at last his gratitude found expression in confused words that said, "conscious as he was of his own unworthiness, he presumed that the audience were applauding their own kindness"; an Irishism that produced roars of of good-natured laughter and renewed applause, which if possible was increased when Charles Kemble announced that the play would be repeated every evening. Then, whilst cheers still rang through the house, Sheridan Knowles, dazzled and confused, ran panting to his dressing-room where bolting the door, he sank down on his knees as he told a friend, "and from the bottom of my soul thanked God for His wondrous kindness to me. I was thinking on the bairns at home, and if ever I uttered the prayer of a grateful heart it was in that little chamber."

As the comedies and tragedies he spent twelve years

in writing brought him but eleven hundred pounds, or less than a hundred a year, he from this time forward, for many years, continued on the stage, playing both in the provinces and in America, chiefly representing the heroes of his own productions. In a statement that serves to show the change time has brought to dramatists, he says it was to his brief success as an actor that "I owe what I should in vain have looked for as an author, emancipation from debt, a decently furnished house, the means of giving my children ample education, relief from the doubt whether to-morrow might not bring short commons or none at all." Before his life closed he once more changed his occupation and became a Baptist minister.

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CHAPTER VII

The Beginning of Edward Irving—Goes to the Edinburgh University when Thirteen—Poor Students—Tutor to Jane Welsh—A Clever Child—The subconscious Self—Thomas Carlyle first sees Edward Irving—Their Meeting at Edinburgh—Carlyle's Irritation—Irving's Chivalrous Generosity—The blessed Conquest of a Friend—The Minister at Kirkcaldy—Isabella Martin—A kind of Engagement—Irving suddenly discovers that he loves Jane Welsh—Making a clean Breast of it—The Lovers hope—Irving leaves Kirkcaldy and settles in Edinburgh—The mean Contradictions and poor Results of School-mastering—Carlyle a poor, proud, shy Young Man—Irving as a Preacher—The Opinion of a Hide-bound Public—Is recommended to Dr. Chalmers of Glasgow—Takes Carlyle to visit Jane Welsh—The Bright Influence of her Presence—Carlyle begins a Correspondence with her—Irving receives unprofitable Admonition—Thinks of going to Jamaica—An Offer from a London Congregation—Parting with Carlyle—Letters to, Jane Welsh—His Spirit is oppressed—Isabella Martin is told the Truth—"Your Bond or Utter Ruin, Sir"

CHAPTER VII

WHILE those concerned with the theatre busied themselves over the things of its mimic world, now as forgotten as if they had never caused rejoicings or disappointments, loud-voiced triumph or angry fumings, the religious world was startled from its torpid complacency by a phenomenon so adverse to all experience, so astounding in its claims to spiritual intervention, as to attract the reverent wonder of all earnest souls, the scepticism and mockery of many righteous people.

The strange history of this phenomenon is inseparately connected with the life of Edward Irving, common enough in its beginning, touched at an early date with heroism and sacrifice, always noble in its aims, developing into mysticism, and ending while still young in tragedy sufficiently sorrowful to compel pity for the vanquished in hearts that had only scorn for the triumphant man. Born on the same date as the poet Shelley, August 4th, 1792, in Annan, a little town in Dumfriesshire, he was the son of a tanner subsequently a farmer, who had married a woman

considered to be above him in rank ; her people being in the corn trade and she aspiring to gentility. The inhabitants of Annan, those forming his first environment and therefore colouring his after life, were "an argumentative, clear-headed, sound-hearted, if rather conceited and contentious set of people, more given to intellectual pursuits than some of their neighbours," as Carlyle states. A schoolmaster worthy of them and of his two most distinguished pupils, the man just named and Edward Irving, was found in old Adam Hope, a lean person with stooping figure, brown complexioned face, sharp eyes, and two jet black front teeth, economically made of cork, and chargeable for something of the contemptuous expression of his grin.

To this severe, meritorious man, the revered author of an English grammar, Edward Irving owed his sound knowledge of mathematics and Latin ; to the continual discussion of theological points, the commentaries on sermons heard and well remembered, that formed the stable subject of conversation in Annan, was due the religious spirit that from early youth manifested itself. Evidence of this being shown, amongst other ways, by his persistency in joining a band of zealous and controversial-minded men, who, diverging in theological opinions from their own minister, hied them on sabbath mornings six miles in all weathers to the minister at Ecclefechan meeting-house, discussing texts and interpreting Scripture on their way thither and back. Young Irving's eagerness to trot beside them did not meet with the approval

of his parents on days when sleet and rain swept across the sorrowful grey moors, drenching him : yet his zeal and that of his companions was stimulated by the hardy piety of some weavers who had walked fifteen miles, bare-kneed to the winds ; and who having hung their saturated plaids to dry in the porch, contentedly sat in the bleak chapel a couple of hours at a stretch, alert to a sermon whose thunders were often emphasised by rattling windows and howling storms.

Edward Irving, destined by his parents' wish as well as his own for the ministry, was sent to Edinburgh University when only thirteen, where pupils of that age were not uncommon ; those intended for the Church having to spend four years there in the study of philosophy and classics ; when, after taking a degree or obtaining a certificate for proficiency in logic, classics, or mathematics, they were obliged to study theology for four years more, though attendance at the University was required only from four to six months in each of these years. His comrades here were sons of parents, as a rule, poorer than his own ; who from their bleak, carefully nurtured farms, their workshops, their savings from labour at the looms, sent their boys stores of oatmeal and cheese, the staple food of these sturdy lads, eaten in their cheap rented rooms high up in the Edinburgh houses, ancient, grey, and picturesque in their tarnished splendour, the University sheltering no students. And so poor were they in general, so economic in spirit, that their journeys to and from the capital, at term time or at vacation,

were made on foot, occupying many days and nights spent in shepherds huts or small farm houses.

To Edward Irving the tramping of many miles, twenty or more in a day, across springy moors, beside burns, over breezy hillsides, was an intoxicating delight ; for fond of nature he found joy in the freedom of outdoor life ; leaping for preference all gates that barred his way ; as great a swimmer as a walker ; proficient in all sports ; something of the freshness of the mountain air in his young spirit. The athletic was but one side of his character ; for as a student, his thirst for knowledge was ardent ; indoors and out books being his companions, found in his pockets when not in his hands, their contents often on his lips, gaining living force from his sonorous voice as he declaimed while striding along the country side. And such was his mastery of classics, logic, and mathematics that at seventeen he took his degree ; when he became a "partial student of Divinity," prosecuting his intermediate studies unaided, and presenting himself at fixed periods to matriculate, undergo examinations, and deliver discourses. Meanwhile he endeavoured to earn his living by teaching, as was the custom with such students ; and on the high recommendation of his professors, he was appointed master of a school at Haddington, a responsible position for a lad in his eighteenth year but one he filled to the satisfaction of the hard headed, exacting parents of his pupils.

One of the most prosperous and prominent members

of this township was Dr. Welsh, to whom Providence had denied the desired son, though his wife had presented him with a daughter, their only child. To educate her as if she had been a boy, to prepare her active and absorbing mind for companionship with his own, became his wish, also the girl's, though at first this scheme found no favour with her mother. Putting his intentions into effect, Dr. Welsh engaged Irving as tutor to his little daughter Jane, who had in secret begun to learn Latin. Irving's hours of instruction were from six to eight in the morning, and after his school door was closed in the evening. So much of a child was she who was afterwards to take such hold upon his heart, that frequently before beginning lessons in the chill darkness of winter mornings, he would lift her in his arms while he pointed out the paling constellations, the glory of wandering stars, naming them, speaking of the incredible distances across whose blue gulphs their rays shot, speculating on their influences on this planet, lesser than most of them ; something of that mysticism in his thoughts that later was to possess his soul and sweep it towards heights to whose dangers, but not to whose beatitudes, he was blind.

But any rhapsodies indulged in at this time were checked by the study of mathematics, in which his pupil delighted. And so anxious was she to work hard that oftentimes she would sit up half the night over her lessons in secret ; the house otherwise steeped in darkness and sleep. Lest tired nature might

indulge itself, she used to tie a weight to one of her ankles and so wake betimes ; a practice her mother discovered, and from that time her father, whose word was law to her, forbade her to rise before five. One day when her mind had been greatly perplexed by a problem in Euclid, she went to bed fretted because she was unable to solve it ; but her sub-conscious self continuing the task, she rose in the darkness of night, worked it out satisfactorily, and returned to bed, unaware of what had been done until morning showed her the problem clearly solved on her slate. She read Latin fluently ; her studies in that tongue conducing "to change her religion and make her into a sort of Pagan," as she afterwards said ; her teacher all unaware of this effect.

The county town of Haddington is not far removed from Annan, to which one memorable day the latter paid a visit, that he might grasp the hand of his old master, Adam Hope ; one of whose pupils at this time was a grave-visaged, violent-tempered, shock-headed lad named Thomas Carlyle, who remembered Irving coming into the big airy class-room, lighted on both sides, where the boys, whilst presumably preparing their lessons, were all attention with eye and ear to the noted Edward Irving, who, scrupulously dressed in black, looking neat, self-possessed, and enviable, seemed "a flourishing slip of a youth, with coal black hair, swarthy clear complexion, very straight on his feet, and except for the glaring squint alone, decidedly handsome."

The first interview between these individuals—one some five years younger than the other, both hailing from the same district—did not take place until various changes had happened in their careers; one had been that Irving, after two years spent at Haddington, was promoted to the mastership of an academy at Kirkcaldy, on the north shore of the Firth of Forth in Fifeshire, where he went joyously enough, unconscious of the impression he had made on his warm-hearted, wilful-natured pupil, little Jane Welsh, whose mind was sufficiently matured at the age of fourteen to write a tragedy, and whose affections had begun to focus themselves on her teacher. A second change was that Thomas Carlyle, having finished his course at Edinburgh University, had been elected as mathematical tutor at Annan; he also being intended for the ministry by his father, a stonemason, who afterwards became a farmer; though the young man himself had no enthusiasm for “the business,” as he describes the ministry, and was more and more sighting “grave prohibitive doubts” rising ahead of him. In the winter of 1815, being then in his twentieth year, he was in Edinburgh, having gone to the capital to deliver one of the discourses required of Divinity students. While there he visited one evening a cousin and schoolfellow named Waugh, with whom he was “not too vigorously conversing” when the door opened and in stepped Irving, together with Nichol, a mathematical teacher, his friend.

What followed is best described in Carlyle's inimit-

able phrases, laying bare his own nature in its contrast with that of the man who was to become his friend, of whose success as a student and as a teacher, illuminating and astonishing everybody, he had heard with feelings that might have been envious had he not struggled against them, and made Irving's learning a source of emulation. "Here was Trismegistus Irving, a victorious bashaw, while poor I was so much the reverse," says Carlyle in his "Reminiscences." "The conversation in a minute or two became quite special, and my unwilling self the centre of it; Irving directing upon me a whole series of questions about Annan matters, social or domestic mostly, of which I knew little, and had less than no wish to speak, though I strove politely to answer succinctly what I could.

"In the good Irving all this was very natural, nor was there in him, I am well sure, the slightest notion to hurt me or be tyrannous to me. Far the reverse his mood at all times towards all men. But there was, I conjecture, something of conscious, unquestionable superiority, of careless natural *de haute en bas* which fretted on me, and might be rendering my answers more and more succinct. Nay, my small knowledge was failing; and I had more than once on certain points, as 'Has Mrs. — got a baby? Is it son or daughter?' and the like, answered candidly, 'I don't know.' I think three or two such answers to such questions had followed in succession, when Irving, feeling uneasy, and in a dim manner that the game was going wrong, answered in gruffish yet not ill-

natured tone : ' You seem to know nothing,' to which I with prompt emphasis, somewhat provoked, replied : ' Sir, by what right do you try my knowledge in this way ? Are you grand inquisitor, or have you authority to question people and cross-question at discretion ? I have no interest to inform myself about the births in Annan, and care not if the process of birth and generation there should cease and determine altogether.' ' A bad example that,' cried Nichol, breaking into laughter ; ' that would never do for me (a fellow that needs pupils)', and laughed heartily, joined by Waugh, and perhaps Irving, so that the thing passed off more smoothly than might have been expected ; though Irving of course felt a little hurt, and I think did not altogether hide it from me while the interview still lasted, which was only a short while. This was my first meeting with the man whom I had afterwards, and very soon, such cause to love."

The cause Carlyle refers to shows Irving for the man he was. His methods of teaching at Kirkcaldy were not generally approved of ; for whilst it was admitted that he brought his pupils on amazingly, it was complained that he did so at the expense of kindness ; cruelty was hinted at, he was declared proud, and it was ultimately decided by the malcontents to have another classical and mathematical master as his opponent. The idea was acted on, and the appointment was offered to Thomas Carlyle who, before accepting it, stipulated that he should visit Kirkcaldy

during the coming holidays, and determine if the place suited him. Before the time for this inspection visit came Adam Hope's wife died suddenly, and Carlyle, still teaching at Annan, went one evening to testify his silent condolence with the poor old man, whose gloomy look and thankful pressure of the hand, he long remembered. To Carlyle's surprise he found Irving there, then on his holidays, the time being late in July 1816. Whatever doubts the younger man had of his reception, were quickly and forever set at rest; for at sight of him Irving heartily shook his hand, welcomed him as if he had been a brother, and presently said to his rival: "You are coming to Kirkcaldy to look about you in a month or two. You know I am there; my house and all that I can do for you is yours; two Annandale people must not be strangers in Fife."

Though doubting Thomas could not quite credit this chivalry, he felt relieved and pleased; but soon put it to the test, for on going to Kirkcaldy he called at Irving's house on the Sands, was received with exuberant good nature, made welcome to the use of his library and shown all hospitality; for all of which Carlyle bears testimony to his host's nobility. "Room for plenty of the vulgarest peddling feelings there was, and there must still have been between us, had either of us, especially had Irving, been of pedlar nature," writes he. "And I can say there could no two Kaisers, nor Charlemagne and Barbarossa, had they neighboured one another in the Empire of Europe,

been more completely rid of all that *Sordes*, than were we two schoolmates in the burgh of Kirkcaldy. . . . From the first we honestly liked one another and grew intimate, nor was there ever, while we both lived, any cloud or grudge between us, or an interruption of our feelings for a day or hour. Blessed conquest of a friend in this world."

Carlyle's indebtedness to this good genius of his life, soon became an immeasurable quantity, as will be seen later. Other facts must first be recorded ; such as Irving's warm welcome on first coming to Kirkcaldy to the home of the minister, a well intentioned, vain, socially disposed man the father of marriageable, plain daughters, throwing wistful eyes at eligible young men, in the front rank of which Irving stood ; his singular personality, unusual ability, his earnestness and originality marking him for distinction. His quick responsiveness to kindness was mistaken by the eldest of the girls, Isabella, as appreciation of her worth. Even she could scarcely have credited herself with charm. Carlyle found her a person of "bouncing, frank, gay manners and talk, studious to be amiable, but never quite satisfactory on the side of genuineness. Something affected you feared always in these fine spirits and smiling discourses, to which, however, you answered with smiles. She was very ill-looking withal ; a skin always under blotches and discolourment ; muddy grey eyes, which for their part never laughed with the other features ; pockmarked, ill-shapen, triangular kind of face, with

hollow cheeks and long chin ; decidedly unbeautiful as a young woman."

For all this, Isabella Martin, alert for reciprocal signs of admiration, had—before Irving was long resident at Kirkcaldy—brought about a state of things between them to which the family, eager for the settlement of one of a number, affixed its sign manual by regarding it as "a kind of engagement." In permitting this Irving soon found he had made a desperate mistake. As Kirkcaldy was not far from Haddington, he occasionally used his brief leisure to visit there and continue his friendship with his former pupil, Jane Welsh, whom he now found fatherless and also an heiress. Not that these facts were the least important beside the thrilling, bewildering discovery, suddenly unconcertedly flashed on him, that he loved her, had loved her all along, mistaking his affection for interest ; and supremest and happiest of all knowledge, learning that which her pen years later confessed, that she passionately loved him. So rare a prize seldom fell to man's lot. Intellectually something of a genius, her heart was warm, sympathetic, staunch, capable of the sacrifices it was subsequently called on to make ; her wit excellent, her narrative and descriptive powers uncommon, good sense crowning her other gifts ; while outwardly she was fascinating, her figure graceful and supple, her head well formed, her forehead broad, her features gaining in expression from want of perfect regularity, her dark eyes full of fire half screened

by long curving lashes, complexion of creamy white and rose pink. An additional charm, always felt if not immediately recognised in the opposite sex by men, was her knowing how to dress well.

Five minutes was the limit of time given to the ordinary male creature she talked to, before he felt impelled to offer himself as her future husband; the result being that many men were made unhappy. The state of Irving's mind may be imagined; its bewildering hope; the deadly fear that his own rashness, or weakness, or blindness might blight her peace and joy, and his own likewise; desolation and chaos in view, towards which he dared not glance. But however invertebrate he had been in the past, he would be strong in the present. His unflinching integrity demanded a confession of his position regarding Isabella Martin. Being shared, his dread lost half its strength; and with the inextinguishable hope of youth, and its ignorance of life's tragedies, Jane Welsh and he trusted he would not, on making a clean breast of his mistake, be held to the arrangement made for rather than by him in the Martin household. But until he was set free, his old pupil declared that nothing stronger than friendship should exist between them; her heart in this respect yielding to her judgment. As the date of his marriage depended on his call to the ministry, or in other words on his receipt of a decent income, he weakly postponed his endeavour to free himself from Isabella Martin; but his visits to Haddington and to her who was the sum and sole happiness of his life

were continued ; and between such occasions he wrote her letters and poems. On her part, though she had many suitors she refused them one and all ; tears, threats of suicide, upbraidings of widowed mothers having no effect in changing her determination not to marry those who besieged her.

Possibly it was his irksome position regarding the Martin family that made Irving resign his school-mastership at Kirkcaldy and settle at Edinburgh, where his prospects were not favourable, his hopes limiting themselves to tuitions that might or might not be obtainable. Haddington, however, was not far from Edinburgh, to which delightful city Jane Welsh frequently came as a visitor to relatives and friends, and as a beacon light to him. Carlyle had left Kirkcaldy at the same time as Irving ; having grown tired of school-mastering with "its mean contradictions and poor results," and preferring "to perish in the ditch if necessary, rather than continue living by such a trade." He also went to Edinburgh to live on his hard savings of some ninety pounds ; a poor proud, shy, young man, grim and sorrowful, then beginning to suffer from dyspepsia, "a rat gnawing at the pit of his stomach" ; the disease which never afterwards wholly left him in peace, and was largely responsible for his black outlook on humanity, and for the vitriolic strokes with which he etched so many of its members who came in contact with him. He had at this time abandoned all idea of entering the ministry, was living solitary and unknown, losing his health, paying as

much as fifteen shillings and twopence for his weekly bill, occasionally meeting "stupid intellectualities," writing for "Brewster's Encyclopædia," a prey to nameless struggles and miseries, a victim to insomnia from impossibility to be free from noise, thinking of becoming a lawyer, and with the future all uncertain stretching grey before him.

Irving, his friend noticed, suffered at this time from a visible gloom ; "his old strong sunshine only getting out from time to time ;" probably at periods when hope promised him happiness with Jane Welsh. The time was now drawing near when he would be expected to clear up that "vague understanding with another person, not a definite engagement" (as Miss Jewsbury, long years afterwards the confidant of Jane, describes his relations with Isabella Martin), or marry her. In June 1815 he had been licensed to preach the Gospel and "exercise his gift," by the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, and from that date awaited a fixed appointment. From the first he was listened to with interest, much comment, and not always with approval. His fine voice, deep, melodious and clear, had the power of carrying his words direct to the heart ; old servile crusted methods were discarded ; attitude, gesture, and elocution studied ; his words never wanting in flow or eloquence which formed itself on the old, stately, Puritanical methods. Carlyle, who had hearkened to him with critical ears in the kirk at Kirkcaldy, says that Irving's style "was sufficiently surprising to his hide-bound public, and this was but a

slight circumstance to the novelty of the matter he set forth upon them. Actual practice. 'If this thing is true, why not do it? You had better do it. There will be nothing but misery and ruin in not doing it.' That was the gist and continual purport of all his discoursing, to the astonishment and deep offence of hide-bound mankind."

Some there were sufficiently keen eared to hear in his preaching that strength, piety, and compassion which was an inspiration and succour to weary and aspiring souls. One of these was Dr. Andrew Thomson, minister of St. George's Presbyterian church in Edinburgh, who recommended him to Dr. Chalmers of Glasgow, then the most famous preacher in all Scotland. By arrangement, Irving delivered a sermon in St. George's church, unaware that Dr. Chalmers was among his hearers, the date being August 2nd, 1819. His earnestness and eloquence gave satisfaction, and some six weeks later he set out on foot for Glasgow, where he was to serve for a month on trial as assistant to Chalmers. Like most men of real worth his confidence in himself was small, and before facing his new congregation he had said to their minister: "I will preach to them if you think fit; but if they bear with my preaching, they will be the first people who have borne with it."

His fine presence, his enthusiasm, his unsparing labours among the poorest, something lovable about the man, soon made him a favourite. Occasionally he visited Edinburgh and when there went further

still to Haddington, hope of freedom yet making his meeting with Jane Welsh a delirious joy. Once when he went there he took Carlyle, they walking sixteen good miles cheerily together ; the latter being ignorant then and for years after of the affection existing between his friend and the young woman he now saw for the first time, who was to become memorable to him whilst life endured. His visit to Haddington lasted three or four days ; they staying at the George Inn, but being frequent guests of Mrs. Welsh, whose daughter, now in her twentieth year, talked to them of men and books, as they sat in the old-fashioned parlour to which her taste lent an air of modest splendour. As she had few volumes to read that had not already been devoured and digested, Carlyle coming out of his shyness and restraint under the bright influence of her presence, offered to send her some from Edinburgh, which afterwards was done, his parcels enclosing notes ; and in this way a correspondence was begun between them that had hardly any interruption and no break until the end. Another man was thenceforth added to those who loved her ; he carrying away from Haddington a memory of her, never more to leave him ; one picture in particular standing out against the sombreness of his mind, of "a red dusky evening, the sky hanging huge and high, but dim as with dust or drought over Irving and me, as we walked home to our lodging at the George Inn."

The days were soon ended in which these two

friends might enjoy such holidays. Irving's position at Glasgow was far from satisfactory to himself. His strong personality found little room for expansion in an atmosphere dominated by Dr. Chalmers ; and congregations that received commonplaces and emphasised platitudes as the utterances of an oracle from the latter, heard Irving's burning words with cold and unprofitable admonition, scenting some terrible schism in his originality, commenting on his odd ways, giving no encouragement to his enthusiasms, and speaking their minds plainly with the comfortable satisfaction of those performing a duty. Such unfavourable opinions of himself as were not personally made known to him, were reported to him by Dr. Chalmers who "made him feel black in his prospects." Though Irving was, for a man, singularly devoid of vanity, he felt a deep pleasure in being loved ; and that he was not even appreciated tried him sorely.

Fretful under the restraint of conscious powers, he was considering the suggestion of going to Jamaica as a missionary, when a Presbyterian congregation in London, recently much depleted and very poor, having its chapel half hidden in the crowded lanes of Hatton Garden, invited him to preach before them on trial and to become their minister if approved of. This offer removing him from contradictions and hindrances was warmly welcomed by him ; salary or position being unimportant so long as he was free to utter the messages to mankind with which he believed himself charged.

Negotiations were brief, and preparations being made he set out for London to begin a new phase in his life. Carlyle long remembered their parting. "A dim night, November or December, between nine and ten, in the coffee room of the Black Bull Hotel. He was to start by early coach to-morrow. Glad I was bound to be, and in a sense was, but very sad I could not help being. He himself looked hopeful, but was agitated with anxieties too, doubtless with regrets as well ; more clouded with agitation than I had ever seen the fine habitual sober light of him before. I was the last friend he had to take farewell of."

He arrived in London on Christmas Eve 1821, and began his labours next day in the poor little chapel, grey and black, holding a congregation of scarce fifty, almost entirely composed of young Scotsmen, most attentive and grave. From the first his freshness and vigour made a favourable impression on his hearers, who were not slow to offer their appreciation : so that in writing to Carlyle three weeks later, he refers to, but will not repeat "the compliments which burst on me," adding, "It is so new a thing for me to be praised in my preaching, I know not how to look. I have been hailed with the warmest reception. They anticipate great things." Something of the same kind was written on February 9th, 1822, to Jane Welsh, addressed as "My Dear and Lovely Pupil," in which he also said that, "from being a poor desolate creature, melancholy of success, yet steel against misfortune, I have become all at once

full of hope and activity. My hours of study have doubled themselves, my intellect, long unused to expand itself, is now awakening again, and truth is revealing itself to my mind. And perhaps the dreams and longings of my fair correspondent may yet be realised. . . .”

The three months of his probation being ended he was approved of and selected as their minister by the congregation of Hatton Garden chapel. In the meantime he had successfully recommended Carlyle as tutor to the sons of Mrs. Buller, the wife of a retired Anglo-Indian of eminence, and a woman of fashion, who had been attracted by curiosity to hear Irving preach, and was afterwards introduced to and advised by him as to the education of her boys. In March he returned to Scotland to prepare for his ordination in the following summer. Though now appointed minister to a London congregation that gave him unstinted appreciation ; raised to independence by a guaranteed salary of five hundred a year ; placed in a position where he was free to give rein to his enthusiasms—altogether a state of things un hoped for but a little while before—he was sad enough at heart. “Many things oppress my spirit at the present moment,” he writes from Glasgow to Carlyle in April ; “nothing more than parting with these most worthy and kind-hearted people” (whose severe comments and dislike of original ways he had already forgiven and forgotten). “Some other things also, which I cannot render into

language unto my own mind. There is an independence about my character, a want of resemblance especially with others of my profession, that will cause me to be apprehended ill of. I hope to come through honestly and creditably. God grant it."

That which most oppressed his spirit was the fear lest he should be forced to make Isabella Martin his wife. For once ordained, and with a salary sufficient to begin domestic life, he must either break with or marry her. Hope and despair were struggling in his heart; the former hinting that he would come through his efforts to free himself with honesty and credit; the latter pointing to a case just then tried and creating much scandal, of a minister who sought to break his marriage engagement. The long deferred moment for action had come at last, and he wrote to the woman he loved telling her he would plainly state his case to Dr. Martin and his daughter; his letter containing on one sheet a passionate sonnet that told what she already knew, and would never forget; his expression of it so dear to her, that never in life did she part with it. Confession regarding his affections, painful to all, was made to the Martins; but not every day was a husband of such fair promise to be found for a daughter more than plain, and the minister was decisive in his judgment. "Your bond, or utter ruin, sir," his prompt answer, which routed all further dreams of happiness; and as their dreamer admitted, almost "made his faith and principles to totter."

How the news was communicated to, or received

by Jane Welsh, is not stated ; but it cannot be doubted that she strengthened him to keep what was considered as an engagement, and to avoid a scandal that would blight his career. A year was to pass before his marriage took place, and they still tenaciously clung to the hope that something in heaven or on earth would intervene to prevent their lives from sorrowful separation, to save this crushing of their love. And meanwhile they agreed to correspond. In one of his letters addressed to "My well-beloved Friend and Pupil," he says : "Heaven grant me its grace to restrain myself ; and forgetting my own enjoyments, may I be enabled to combine into your single self all that duty and plighted faith leave at my disposal. When I am in your company my whole soul would wish to serve you, and my tongue trembles to speak my heart's fulness. But I am enabled to forbear, and have to find other avenues than the natural ones for the overflowing of an affection which would hardly have been able to confine itself within the avenues of nature, if they had all been opened. But I feel within me the power to prevail, and at once to satisfy duty to another and affection to you. I stand truly upon ground which seems to shake and give way beneath me, but my help is in Heaven. Bear with this much, my early charge, my present friend, from one who loves to help and defend you, who would rather die than wrong you or see you wronged. Say that I shall speak no more of that I am undergoing, and I shall be silent."

CHAPTER VIII

Irving marries—Carlyle's Reference to his Friend's Honeymoon—A New Life opens before Irving—Preparation for his Mission—Personal Description—The Duke of York among the Congregation—Canning is struck by a Phrase—Reference to Irving in the House of Commons—Becomes the Fashion—Crowds rush to hear him—Lady Jersey sits on the Pulpit Stairs—Three Newspapers to praise and Three to blame him—A New Chapel is built for him—He writes to Jane Welsh—He sounds Carlyle's Praises—And welcomes him to London—Carlyle's Opinion of Literary Men—Jane Welsh and Thomas Carlyle—A Proposal and its Reply—Carlyle's Egotism—An Instrument of Fate—Jane Welsh's Confession to Carlyle—Irving's Study of Prophecy—A Work sent to him by God—Henry Drummond—An Assembly at Albury Park—Foundation of the Catholic Apostolic Church—Belief in Modern Miracles—Speaking in Strange Tongues—Some Account of a Strange Phenomenon—Extraordinary Scenes in Irving's Church—He is charged with Heresy—Removed from the Ministry—A Broken Heart—Meets Carlyle once more—Farewell Visit to his Old Friends—The End of All—Establishment of his Catholic Apostolic Church

CHAPTER VIII

IN July 1822 Edward Irving entered on his ministry as an ordained clergyman at the Caledonian Chapel, Hatton Garden, throwing himself into his work with an enthusiasm that was probably sought as a refuge and relief from the misery referred to in his letters; seeking in exhausting work by day to ensure himself against the sleeplessness of nights, whose blackness was painted by haunting visions of what had been and might be no more. But days, weeks, and months passed without bringing any event to hinder his marriage; so that when the appointed time came he braced himself for the ordeal, went to Haddington, and on October 13th, 1823, made Isabella Martin his wife; "and from that time the old, simple, unconscious Irving ceased to exist," says Froude in his "Life of Carlyle." On their way to the Highlands where the honeymoon was to be spent, Irving diverged from his route that he might see Carlyle, then acting as tutor to the Bullers at Kinnaird. All unaware of the tragedy this union symbolised, and mistaking Irving's boisterous efforts

to conceal his feelings and deceive himself, Carlyle wrote that the bridegroom "seemed superlatively happy, as was natural to the occasion"; adding that the bride "was demure and quiet, though doubtless not less happy at heart, really comely in her behaviour. In the least beautiful she never could be; but Irving had loyally taken her as the consummate flower of all his victory in the world—poor good tragic woman—better probably than the fortune she had after all."

On his return to London, a new chapter opened in his life. Disappointment in worldly happiness has forced innumerable men and women into religious enthusiasm. Such an experience was his. A temperament always exalted, now aimed at the highest. Mankind was perishing spiritually for need of light, which would be found in the "simple truths of revelation delivered as ultimate facts not to be reasoned on, and expressed as Scripture expressed them." His brethren had failed to convey those truths, because ignorant of the most effective way of discharging their duty. "They prepare for teaching gipsies, for teaching bargemen, for teaching miners, by apprehending their way of conceiving and estimating truth; and why not prepare for teaching imaginative men, and political men, and legal men, and scientific men, who bear the world in hand?" he argued. That he had fitted himself for such a task none could doubt. Careful study of St. Chrysostom the Christian Plato, and Jeremy Taylor the English Chrysostom, had left its mark upon his intellect; whilst he candidly admitted



From an engraving published in 1823, after the drawing by A. Robertson.]

THE REV. EDWARD IRVING,

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that that he strove to imitate "the splendour of those lasting forms of speech which Hooker, Bacon, and Milton chose for the covering of their everlasting thoughts."

Filled with religious fervour, ready for a new crusade, he began his work. Twice on Sundays his congregations were addressed in stirring words by a man of striking figure, over six feet high, proportionately built, his nobly shaped head covered with curling, black hair, parted in the centre and falling to his collar, deeply set eyes disfigured by a squint, shaded by thick black brows, a large nose, finely curved mouth, the whole face expressive of courage, intellect, and enthusiasm.

The effect was surprising. A chapel in which fifty persons had languidly congregated to hear his first discourse, soon became thronged to overflowing. The Duke of York heard and approved of him. One whose word had more weight in the intellectual world, Sir James Mackintosh, came later and was struck by the preacher's saying that a certain family of orphans for whom he appealed were "thrown upon the fatherhood of God"; a phrase which startled Canning when repeated to him. The statesman then made his way to Hatton Garden, admired Irving's eloquence, and referred to it subsequently in a debate on the Church revenues in the House of Commons. In this way attention was directed to the young Scottish preacher; and society ever eager for sensation, sought him in distant purlieus. Those who listened once came again,

bringing others with them ; until soon his hearers included the highest representatives of politics, literature, fashion, and art ; whose carriages blocked the approaching streets, they themselves standing in the crowd before the unopened doors of the chapel ; some satisfied to find room where they could, like Lady Jersey sitting on the pulpit steps, or Archdeacon, afterwards Cardinal, Manning, pressed into an alcove ; this being before tickets were used for numbered seats as in a theatre. Artists begged permission to paint the portrait of one certain to furnish a striking picture ; many notable people sought his acquaintance, crowds he was too gentle to repulse invaded his house and encroached on his hospitality, while a large section of the press, blind to his zeal, sceptical regarding his honesty, seeing in his efforts only food for laughter and matter for their columns, parodied his sermons, ridiculed his manner, described him as a common quack, and descending to irretrievable vulgarity nicknamed him Dr. Squintum.

Some echoes of this unexpected uproar reaching Scotland alarmed his sagacious friend Carlyle, who thought Irving was incurring the risk of many vagaries and disasters and at least the certainty of much disquietude. Writing to Jane Welsh he says of the man who he had no suspicion was dear to her : " With three newspapers to praise him and three to blame, with about six peers and six dozen right honourables introduced to him every Sunday, tickets issuing for his church as if it were a theatre, and

all the devout old women in the capital treating him with comfits and adulation, I know that ere now he is striking the stars with his sublime head—well if he does not break his shins among the rough places of the ground. I wish we saw him safely down again and walking as other men walk.”

Filled with profound seriousness, with ardent piety, without vanity and with no room for egotism in his honest nature, Irving regarded and welcomed his popularity merely as a sign that “the Christian religion was to be a truth again, not a paltry form, and to rule the world; he unworthy, even he, the chosen instrument.” A time came, very rapid in its coming, when the representatives of fame and fashion, their curiosity satisfied, their ears unwilling to hear sermons that flowed for three hours at a stretch and that if true promised them an uncomfortable future, suddenly fell away from this preacher. But a large number of earnest persons remained with him, to accommodate whom a new chapel was built in Regent Square, St. Pancras, the foundation stone being laid with much ceremony just two years later than Irving’s arrival at Hatton Garden.

Throughout this exciting time his friends in Scotland were not forgotten. Before his marriage it had been arranged that when he and his wife were settled in London, Jane Welsh should visit them: but when that time came he found himself unequal to the ordeal and was obliged to postpone it. Writing to this effect he says: “My dear Isabella has succeeded in healing

the wounds of my heart by her unexampled affection and tenderness, but I am hardly yet in a condition to expose them. My former calmness and piety are returning. I feel growing in grace and holiness; and before another year I shall be worthy in the eye of my own consciousness to receive you into my house and under my care, which till then I should hardly be." The visit, however, never took place.

For Carlyle he had already procured a tutorship, but with a staunch belief in his genius was anxious to see him launched in the literary world and established in London. Long ago, when both were poor teachers Irving used to say to him: "You will see how one day we two will shake hands across the brook, you as first in literature, I as first in divinity, and people will say: 'Both these fellows are from Annandale. Where is Annandale?'" Now that this prediction had been partially fulfilled regarding himself Irving was desirous of seeing it also verified for Carlyle, and as the latter says: "He figured out purposes of unspeakable profit to me. He seemed to think that if set down in London streets, some strange development of genius would take place in me."

To effect this transplantation Carlyle's praises were sounded to those likely to forward his interests; among others to Mr. Taylor, editor of the *London Magazine*, who hearing he contemplated writing series of portraits of men of genius and character, undertook to publish them monthly. Eagerly welcoming this opening, Carlyle was ready to begin work but hesitated as to

his subject. As he considered "that the biographies of English men of letters are the wretchedest chapters in our history, except the Newgate Calendar," he devoted his first efforts to writing the life of the German poet Schiller, whilst his tutorship with the Bullers was continued. It was not until 1824, when he was in his twenty-ninth year, that Carlyle first saw London, having been summoned with his pupils to the capital by Mrs. Buller. He had sailed from Leith in days before steamers were in common use and arrived at the Tower Wharf. "The giant bustle, the coal heavers, the black buildings, the ten thousand times ten thousand sounds and movements of that monstrous harbour formed the grandest object I had ever witnessed," writes he.

Irving welcomed him with open arms, showed him with delight his new-born baby boy whom he dandled in his arms and played with, and introduced Carlyle, who had just published his translation of Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister," to the various literary men then leaders in their circle, such as Barry Cornwall "a small poet; a slender rough-faced, palish, gentle, languid-looking man," with good manners and an eye of dreamy mildness; Allan Cunningham who, "seems not to know that he is anything beyond a reading mason," and preserved his Annandale accent as faithfully as if he had never crossed the border; Thomas Campbell, "heartless as a little Edinburgh advocate. There is a smirk on his face which would befit a shopman or an auctioneer. His very eye

has the bold vivacity of a conceited worldling. His talk is small, contemptuous, and shallow. The blue frock and trousers, the eye-glass, the wig, the very fashion of his bow, proclaim the literary dandy. . . . His life is that of an exotic. He exists in London as most Scotchmen do, like a shrub disrooted and stuck into a bottle of water."

Severe as these words are, severer still were found for gentle sorrowful Thomas De Quincey; the fact of his being one of the most finished writers in the English language by no means atoning for his greivous sin, of having unfavourably reviewed Carlyle's translation of "Wilhelm Meister." "The dwarf opium-eater, my critic in the *London Magazine*," writes Carlyle, "lives here in lodgings, with a wife and children living, or starving, on the scanty produce of his scribble, far off in Westmoreland. He carries a laudanum bottle in his pocket, and the venom of a wasp in his heart. Vanity and opium have brought him to the state of 'dog distract or monkey sick.' If I could find him, it would give me pleasure to procure him one substantial beefsteak before he dies." For other men of letters, his contempt was almost equal.

"Hazlitt is writing his way through France and Italy. The gin shops and pawnbrokers bewail his absence. Leigh Hunt writes 'Wishing caps' for the *Examiner* and lives on the lightest of diets at Pisa." Macaulay was a "really forcible person, but unhappily without divine idea"; Samuel Rogers, "an elegant, politely

malignant old lady"; Tom Moore, "a lascivious, triviality of great name"; Coleridge was "sunk inextricably in the depth of putrescent indolence"; as for "all the spotted fry that 'report' and 'get up' for the 'public press,' that earn money by writing calumnies, and spend it in punch and other viler objects of debauchery," they were the "filthiest and basest of the children of men. My soul come not into your secrets; mine honour be not united unto you. 'Good heavens,' I often inwardly exclaim; 'and is this the literary world?' This rascal rout, this dirty rabble, destitute not only of high feeling and knowledge or intellect, but even of common honesty. The very best of them are ill-natured weaklings. They are not red-blooded men at all. They are only things for writing articles. I do not hate them. I would only that stone walls and iron bars were constantly between us. Such is the literary world of London; indisputably the poorest part of its population at present."

The letters—published in Mr. Froude's "Life of Carlyle"—from which these extracts are taken, were addressed to Jane Welsh who, a writer of verse, a lover of books, intellectual and independent, was impatient with the narrow limits of the circle in which her lot was cast and welcomed the correspondence and friendship of an original and able man like Carlyle. It was her belief that her superior birth and position would prevent any stronger feeling from rising between them; in which she was mistaken. Though it is doubtful if

his nature, selfish, egotistical, misanthropic and surly, was at any time capable of love, it was certain he liked her most of all women he knew ; recognising that she understood him best, and would prove the most tolerant, least exacting of house-mates. That she flirted with him is undeniable ; now acknowledging his influence in forming her mind, now mimicking his Annandale accent, consulting him on her studies, scorning his protestations of affection, and eventually in answer to his proposal saying : " My friend, I love you. I repeat it, though I find the expression a rash one. All the best feelings of my nature are concerned in loving you. But were you my brother I should love you the same. No. Your friend I will be, your truest, most devoted friend, while I breathe the breath of life. But your wife, never. Never, not though you were as rich as Cræsus, as honoured and renowned as you yet shall be."

Carlyle's reply to this plain statement had nothing in it of a lover's despair. " My heart," said he, " is too old by almost half a score of years, and is made of sterner stuff than to break in junctures of this kind. I have no idea of dying in the Arcadian shepherd's style for the disappointment of hopes which I never seriously entertained, or had no right to entertain seriously."

But this by no means ended the chapter of their relations to each other ; for their correspondence was continued, and their friendship remained undisturbed. That she believed in his future is shown by the last

sentence in her letter ; and a proof of her regard for him was given by an action of hers at this time, of which he was ignorant. By her father's will, his property was settled solely on her ; Mrs. Welsh being left dependent on her daughter. Thinking it was possible, though not probable, she should marry, the heiress said, " she did not choose that her husband, if he was ever to be so disposed, should have it in his power to lessen her mother's income," and therefore transferred the whole of her property to the latter during her life. By another will it was left to Carlyle after her own and her mother's death.

Later a vague understanding was arrived at between Jane Welsh and Thomas Carlyle. Once when they met at Edinburgh, she had so vexed him that giving way to temper he had rushed out of the room, banging the door behind him. Repenting her words she wrote to him saying : " Nothing short of a devil could have tempted me to torment you and myself as I did on that unblessed day." As a result of their reconciliation she consented to share his fortune with him when it was made—a distant prospect at that time.

While staying in London he made known to her a new project for his future. " A miserable scrub of an author sharking and writing articles about town like Hazlitt and De Quincey, and that class of living creatures," he could not be. " The devil in his own good time take all such literary men. One sterling fellow like Schiller, or even old Johnson, would take

half a dozen such creatures by the nape of the neck, between his finger and thumb, and carry them forth to the nearest common sink." He thanked heaven there were other means of living, and among the soberest and best he had contemplated was that of agriculture. He would take a moorland farm in his own country, if she would consent to share its loneliness and toil with him. The mere proposition amazed, perplexed, and brought from her an answer in which she said that though she loved him, she was not in love with him : her feeling for him was composed of sympathy and admiration. She did not wish for fortune more than was sufficient for her wants, but she would not marry to live on less ; and while she had no wish for grandeur, she was unwilling to enter a station of life inferior to her own. "And now let me ask you," she continues, "have you any certain livelihood to maintain me in the manner I have been used to live in ; any fixed place in the rank of society I have been born and bred in ? No. You have projects for attaining both, capabilities for attaining both and much more. But as yet you have not attained them." As for thinking of keeping house at Craigenputtock, she told him, "nothing but your ignorance of the spot saves you from the imputation of insanity for admitting such a thought. Depend upon it you could not exist there a twelvemonth. For my part I could not spend a month at it with an angel."

In his reply Carlyle declared he was neither hurt nor angry with her words, which were dictated by

good sense and sincerity ; but his case was peculiar ; he could not continue his present life as a writer and teacher ; it were better for him to be dead than to try ; a total alteration must be sought ; and, “ I would ask a generous spirit, one whose happiness depended on seeing me happy, and whose temper and purposes were of kindred to my own—I would ask such a noble being to let us unite our resources—not her wealth and rank merely, for these were a small and unessential fraction of the prayer, but her judgment, her patience, prudence, her true affection to mine.” But this egotistical appeal had not the desired effect. She to whom it was addressed candidly told Carlyle that before marrying him she wished to see him “ earning a certain livelihood, and exercising the profession of a gentleman ” ; whether he had hundreds or thousands a year, was a matter of indifference to her. The desired improvement in his circumstances, she candidly admitted, was accompanied by a wish that her sentiments towards him might also improve meantime. “ In withholding this matter in my former letter I was guilty of a false and ill-timed reserve. My tenderness for your feelings betrayed me into an insincerity which is not natural to me. I thought that the most decided objection to your circumstances would pain you less than the least objection of yourself. While in truth, it is in some measure grounded on both. I must be sincere, I find, at whatever cost.”

Those who wish to read in detail the absorbing

story of Jane Welsh's career, are referred to James Anthony Froude's "Life of Carlyle"—from which this sketch is largely taken; but it will be sufficient for the purpose of this chapter to state that, in order to bring about her marriage, fate used as an instrument a person wholly unknown to her. This was Mrs. Basil Montague of Bedford Square, an enthusiastic effusive woman, well-meaning if not judicious, fond of advising and dictating to her friends, and having no objection to rule her circle at large. This full-hearted, sympathetic matron had met Irving when his popularity was at its height; had made friends with, and drawn from him the story of his ill-starred romance; his bondage to Isabella Martin, his love for Jane Welsh who, though returning his affection, sustained him in his resolution to act honourably towards her rival. To such a heroine this romantic lady's heart went out brim full of emotion; and introducing herself by letter she assured Jane Welsh she was ready to love her and eager to pour balm on her wounds.

Sympathy from any source was not likely to commend itself to Jane Welsh, but coming from a stranger it seemed particularly obtrusive; however, she answered civilly. The glimpse of an unusual character which her terse phrases revealed, stirred her correspondent to deeper interest in Jane, which led to a further step. During Carlyle's visit to London he had met Mrs. Montague. Unaware of his feelings towards Jane Welsh, and regarding him merely as



From a miniature by K. Macleay, R.S.A., by kind permission of Miss Froude.

JANE WELSH CARLYLE.

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a close friend of this unhappy pair, and a sharer of their confidences, Mrs. Montague wrote to Carlyle of the affection she believed still existed between Irving and Jane Welsh, which she hoped he would devise some means of ending. To an ordinary man this communication would have acted as a bombshell; but Carlyle's egotism was proof against it; and in his next letter to Jane Welsh he merely mentioned that Mrs. Montague laboured under some strange delusion about her—Jane's—secret history, and told him that her heart was with Irving in London. The suspicion that she loved a man belonging to another woman, promptly brought Jane Welsh's pride to her aid; and flat contradiction was given to this surmise by her announcement to Mrs. Montague that she was about to marry Carlyle.

Mrs. Montague's quick intuition immediately saw the feelings that prompted it. She knew that Jane Welsh did not, and could not love Carlyle, and earnestly implored her to hesitate before bringing misery into her life, before sacrificing herself to the hope of making existence more endurable to an excellent and honest man, and endeavouring to fill a void in her own heart at the same time. Conscience-stricken at having kept her affection for Irving a secret from Carlyle, Jane Welsh immediately forwarded him Mrs. Montague's letter; confessing that she had wilfully deceived him, and had once passionately loved Edward Irving. She added that, "if she had shown weakness in loving a man whom she knew

to be engaged to another, she had made amends in persuading him to marry the other, and save his honour from reproach." Feeling that her deception degraded her in Carlyle's eyes, she told him that if he turned from her, she could not say he was unjust ; but that he had never been dearer to her than at that moment, when she felt in danger of losing his affection and respect.

In reply he stated that he knew he could never make her happy ; that it might be better for her to give him up once and for all. " They might suffer at parting, but they would have obeyed their reason, and time would deaden the pain. No affection was unalterable or eternal. Men themselves, with all their passions, sank to dust and were consumed. . . . The world had a thousand noble hearts that she did not dream of. What was he, and what was his father's house, that she should sacrifice herself for him ? " At this and much more, sadder in its strain, all that was generous in her nature asserted itself ; and as a result she married Carlyle on October 12th, 1826. The tragic epilogue of that union was spoken by her long years after, when time had silvered her hair and experience had seared her heart. " I married for ambition," she said. " Carlyle has exceeded all my wildest hopes ever imagined of him—and I am miserable."

To the student of human nature it is interesting to speculate on what Irving's career might have been, had it been guided by the woman whose intellect, love, and sympathy fitted her for his wife ; and, how far his

marriage was responsible for the ecstatic whirlwind that swept him aloft from the path of sober life only to drop him into the slough of humiliation and gloom. The beginning of a new departure in his ways dates from his meeting with a certain Hatley Frere, a student of prophecy, to whose interpretation of Scripture the religious public had turned a deaf ear. His words fell like seeds on Irving's mind ; his Celtic temperament disposing him to mysticism. In the new light revealed to him, grandiose, flamboyant, and dramatic events were seen to underlie Bible phraseology. The fascination of his study closed on him, and twelve months later its results became apparent in a volume, the title of which bespeaks its startling contents—"Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed."

His belief in Scriptural prophecy received a fresh stimulus when, early in 1826, there fell into his hands, a Spanish work called "The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty," avowedly written by a converted Jew named Juan Josofat Ben Ezra, but in reality the work of a Jesuit priest. To Irving's ardent mind, "this masterpiece of reasoning," had been sent to him by God at a critical time, and he considered well how the gift might be turned to profit. As a result he translated it for the benefit of his congregation. Among these many had listened to his prophetic interpretations with cold criticism ; a few with rapt attention. Notable amongst the latter was Henry Drummond, a man of aristocratic descent, wealthy as the son of the famous

Charing Cross banker, intellectual, a former member of parliament, and above all one who had become "satiated with the empty frivolities of the fashionable world." At his desire there assembled at his country house at Albury in Surrey, a number of Irving's followers, who for six days discussed prophetic teachings. It was there that the community afterwards called the Catholic Apostolic Church was practically founded.

According to Irving's interpretation of Scripture, the second coming of Christ was at hand ; "the sanctuary would be cleansed in Jerusalem, and the powers which then polluted it would be scattered." As a sequence to this belief came the statement that the age of miracles had not passed ; that the spiritual gifts of the Apostolic age were neither exceptional nor confined to a period, but belonged to the Church in every century ; that they had been kept in abeyance only through lack of faith, and would be restored to mankind when Christ presently appeared among them once more. A faith so fervid was ready to receive the startling phenomena that followed.

Irving's congregation having become numerous, an assistant was necessary, and found in the person of the Reverend Alexander Scott, an ardent young man who, impressed by the stronger individuality of his minister, reflected his beliefs. That among them which most appealed to his mind was "that the Holy Ghost ought to be manifested among us all, the same as ever he was in any one of the Primitive Churches."

While on a visit to Scotland he imparted this conviction to some religious persons, among whom was Mary Campbell, a young peasant living remote from the world in the wild moorland of Fernecarry, and well fitted by temperament and surroundings to receive and act on suggestion. Weak in body but strong in faith, his words deeply impressed her. A few months previously her sister had died of consumption, a disease it was believed would also remove Mary from the world in a brief time. But while her relations expected her death, she prepared to convert the heathen ; for which purpose, like the Apostles of old, she made ready to receive the Holy Spirit.

On a certain Sunday in March 1830 she with a surviving sister and a female friend spent the day in fasting, humiliation, and prayer, "with a special respect to the restoration of the gifts of the Holy Ghost"; when suddenly He "came with mighty power upon the sick woman as she lay in her weakness, and constrained her to speak at great length and with superhuman strength, in an unknown tongue, to the astonishment of all who heard, and to her own great edification and enjoyment in God." Modern science teaches that hysteria is contagious. The manifestations felt by Mary Campbell spread to an invalid neighbour, Margaret Macdonald, and in turn to her brother James. Feeling himself constrained to bid her arise and stand upright, Margaret left the bed from which she had expected to be carried to the kirk yard. The same command was given to Mary Campbell who

instantly declared herself healed, magnified God, and from that time, seemingly healthy, she preached to great crowds, gave utterance to prophecies, and spoke in strange tongues.

News of these wonders reaching Irving, it seemed as if the hopes he long had cherished were about to be realised, that the Apostolic powers were now restored to the Church, to the confusion of the sceptic and the regeneration of the world. In prayer and watchfulness he and those who believed likewise waited for the manifestations to occur among themselves. Meantime his congregation decided to forward a petition to the Sailor King asking him to appoint a national fast, and Irving with three of his followers presented it to Lord Melbourne, who, good-natured, tactful, and tolerant, gave them the idea of being much impressed by "the solemn things said on the only means of saving this country." In return Irving "implored the blessing and guidance of God on his administration."

It was not until July 1831 that "the miraculous gift of Tongues," manifested itself among his congregation, and their fervent petitions seemed answered. The occasion was a meeting held for prayer that the General Assembly of Scotland might be guided in its judgments at the coming trial of Irving, for statements regarding the nature of Christ that savoured to them of heresy. Two women were then suddenly and forcibly compelled to utter sounds none understood, and to betray evidences of a form of obsession which are common occurrences at spiritualistic seances.

The phenomenon soon spread, and while attending prayer meetings men and women of blameless lives and honourable characters, incapable of trickery, shrinking from notoriety, were obsessed by an overwhelming force they were unable to resist, under whose control they uttered unintelligible sounds, and that left them as suddenly, as inconceivably as it had seized upon them. Robert Baxter, who on subsequently seceding from the congregation declared the phenomenon to be diabolical in its origin, states that while engaged in private prayer the force "fell upon him," when "the utterance was so loud that I put my handkerchief into my mouth to stop the sound, that I might not alarm the house." By degrees the utterances which first were unintelligible, developed into articulate speech; or as Irving said, "the gift perfected itself," so that those to whom it was given "were made to speak in a tongue and to prophesy; that is, to set forth in English words for exhortation, for edification, and comfort; for that is the proper definition of prophesying as was testified by one of the witnesses."

To him this obsession of his flock, readily explainable on psychological grounds, was an answer to his fervent prayer that the gifts bestowed on the early Church might be manifested once more. He tried and did not find them wanting. Therefore in a little while he declared: "I did rejoice with great joy that the bridal jewels of the Church had been found again." For some months he hesitated to

allow the voices to disturb the ordinary services, and those who were unwillingly obsessed at such times were obliged to rush into the vestry or the street, from whence their loud, uncontrollable voices were heard by the startled congregation. But eventually, in October 1831, when some two thousand persons assembled in his chapel had been wrought to excitement by seeing one of those "sealed by the gift" rushing down the aisle and escaping by the principal entrance, uttering the while "sudden doleful and unintelligible sounds," Irving declared he believed it his duty henceforth to submit to the will of God and to permit the manifestations of the Holy Spirit during the public services. From that time forward the Tongues were heard in his chapel, praying, exhorting, predicting the near judgment of Christendom and the second coming of Christ, when the living saints would be caught up to meet Him, and the dead saints would be raised from their graves.

To the public at large, good Christians all, the insanity of Bedlam seemed wisdom in comparison with the claims of inspiration, prophecy, and healing; admitted as probable in ancient times, but deemed rank imposture in modern days; absolutely impossible to the Power from which they sprang originally. However, these daring, astounding claims, roused an excitement that spread like flames through the town; and amazed, eager for excitement, elated at the prospect of hearing and seeing strange sights and sounds, enormous crowds battled round the doors

of Regent Square Chapel for admission ; among the throng great ministers, fashionable women, famous men, no longer kept away through fear of a three hours' discourse ; and side by side with them, scores of pickpockets bent on profit that had no concern with the soul.

Wild confusion continually disturbed the services, whose average attendance numbered three thousand. Unbelievers, described by Irving as "the heedless sons of Belial," betrayed more levity than devotion ; eagerness to catch the words of prophecies impelled wild rushes towards those who spoke them ; and panics were continually raised by the light-fingered, that their harvests might be richer. Many of Irving's flock resented the intrusion of strangers bent on excitement and diversion, and the disturbances they caused ; rival churches deprived of their congregations protested against his faith in the miraculous ; while the press became virtuously indignant over the scenes it described as occurring in his chapel. "Are we to listen to the screaming of hysterical women, and the ravings of frantic men ?" asked the outraged *Times*. "Is bawling to be added to absurdity, and the disturber of a congregation to escape the police and treadmill, because the person who occupies the pulpit vouches for his inspiration ?"

As a result, the trustees of Irving's church laid a complaint before the London Presbytery that he had allowed his services to be interrupted by unauthorised persons, neither ministers nor licentiates,

and prayed that he might be removed from the Caledonian Chapel, of which he was unfitted to remain a minister. The petition was granted, though Irving protested against it with force and eloquence. The blow was keenly felt, though somewhat tempered by the assurance that a large number of his followers were ready to go with him wherever he chose, and that two hundred new members sought admission to his fold. Shut out from the Regent Square Chapel, they assembled in a room in Gray's Inn Road, and later in a studio once used by Benjamin West, in Newman Street. Before taking possession of this, in October 1832, many new ordinances and ceremonies had been introduced to the Catholic Apostolic Church, in obedience to utterances credited as the voice of God. The tongues had stated that the Church should possess those ministers she had in the beginning—apostles, prophets, elders, angels or pastors, and deacons. These offices were to be filled by the inspired, or by those directly called by the inspired; ordination being administered by the imposition of hands.

The new place of worship was furnished and arranged as directed by the same inspired utterances. Instead of a pulpit, a platform capable of accommodating fifty persons was erected at one end. This was ascended by seven steps. On the top were seven seats; the angel occupying the centre, elders three on either side. Below, on a parallel line, were seven seats for as many prophets; lower still were seats for seven deacons; this arrangement symbolising

“a threefold cord of a sevenfold ministry.” The angel ordered the service, the prophets spoke when inspired, and the elders expounded. Early in the following year a fresh trial awaited Irving, when on a charge of heresy regarding statements of his on the sinlessness of Christ’s nature he was brought before the Presbytery of Annan described by Carlyle as “a poor aggregate of Reverend Sticks in black gown, sitting in Presbytery, to pass formal condemnation on a man and a cause which might have been tried in Patmos under presidency of St. John, without the right truth of it being got at.”

Irving fiercely and indignantly defended himself against the charge alleged by this assembly, and then disdaining to await its decision, cried out in his deep melodious voice : “Stand forth. Stand forth. As many as will obey the Holy Ghost, let them depart.” None obeyed the example he set of leaving, and he was solemnly deposed from the ministry of the Scottish Church. The sentence passed upon him broke the heart of a man burning with zeal and ready for martyrdom. But his evil star was still in the ascendant, and a further trial awaited him on his return to his flock ; for on the first Sunday after his deposition had been pronounced, as he was about to baptize an infant, a prophetic utterance declared that what the Church of Scotland had given it could withdraw, and that he must not administer sacraments until he had again received ordination. In obedience to the inspired voice he stood aside, lowly and humble, deprived of

his ministerial functions, and not permitted to officiate in his own church ; for to him had never been given the gifts of the Spirit with which so many of his followers, less ardent, had been endowed. For awhile this man whose fame had filled the world's ears, the valiant leader of his flock, sat among them silent, downcast, sad at soul, listening to the Tongues which had no message of healing, no words of promise for him ; until at last when his patience and resignation had been tried to the uttermost, an ecstatic voice declared he should be ordained by the imposition of hands as angel or chief pastor of the congregation.

But the iron had entered his soul, and his body began to perish. His erect and vigorous figure lost its energy and strength, his cheeks became hollow, his face wrinkled, his raven black hair turned grey ; and though he had not reached his fortieth year, he had suddenly become an old man. But spirit triumphing for a while above the flesh, he worked as incessantly as before, preaching, visiting the sick, comforting the stricken, breathing faith and courage into the wavering and hopeless, allowing himself no rest. Then came periods of lassitude impossible to ignore ; later, symptoms of an inherited consumption showed themselves. Doctors ordered him to a warmer climate, but the prophets bade him set out for Scotland to fulfil an important mission, and with unfaltering faith in their words he prepared to obey.

Thomas Carlyle and his wife had at this time, 1834, come to settle in London for the remainder of their

lives. Whilst living for the previous seven years at Craigenputtoch, a moorland farm in Dumfriesshire, little communication had passed between them and Irving, news of whose doings had reached them and drawn from the woman who had passionately loved him, the sorrowful remark : "There would have been no Tongues, had Irving married me." And now that death was about to separate them, these old friends met once more.

While Carlyle was passing through Kensington Gardens, a figure seated on a bench rose and rushed towards him, and in another second Irving was grasping his hand. With surprise and sorrow Carlyle saw the change time had made, and his heart "was smitten with various emotions." Irving admitted his weak health, but did not regard it as serious. "His tone was not despondent, but it was low, pensive, full of silent sorrow." At parting he gave his address in Bayswater to Carlyle, who promised to call on him. And this he did but without seeing him ; once he was assured the invalid was asleep ; again that he was out ; and so for four successive visits Irving was denied to him. "But at length it struck me," Carlyle wrote, "that there was something questionable in these perpetual 'not at homes' of Irving, and that perhaps his poor jealous, anxious, and much-bewildered wife had her hand in the phenomenon ; as proved to be the fact accordingly." Then with insuppressible indignation, mixed with pity, he called once more, and after some little difficulty was admitted.

“Poor Irving, he lay there on the sofa, begged my pardon for not rising; his wife who also did not, and probably could not well rise, sate at his feet all the time I was there, miserable and haggard. Irving once lovingly ordered her away; but she lovingly excused herself and sate still. He complains of biliousness, of pains at his right short rib; has a short, thick cough, which comes on at the smallest irritation. Poor fellow, I brought a short gleam of old Scottish laughter into his face, into his voice; and that too, set him coughing. He said it was the Lord’s will; looked weak, dispirited, partly embarrassed. He continues toiling daily, though the doctor says rest only can cure him. Is it not mournful, hyper-tragical? There are moments when I determine on sweeping in upon all tongue work and accurséd choking cobwebberies, and snatching away my old best friend to save him from death and the grave.”

This was written in August. Two months later, one damp, grey afternoon of an October day, Irving rode down to Cheyne Row to pay his first and last visit there to his old friends, and bid them farewell before he set out for Glasgow, from whence he was never to return. Calm, friendly, and affectionate he chatted with them some twenty minutes; his manner chivalrously courteous towards the woman whose heart must have ached at seeing the unmistakable signs of their eternal parting heavy upon him; almost his last word to her a compliment upon the taste that decorated the room: “You are like an Eve—make

every place you live in beautiful," words she must have remembered to the last. According to Carlyle, "he was not sad in manner, but was at heart, as you could notice, serious, even solemn. Darkness at hand and the weather damp, he could not loiter. I saw him mount at the door ; watched till he turned the first corner, close by the rector's garden door, and had vanished from us altogether."

After this parting the end came rapidly, for at midnight, of a Sabbath in December 1834, Irving passed from the world in which he had played so strange a part. His body was laid with great ceremony in the crypt of Glasgow Cathedral. To the church he had been instrumental in founding, his death made no difference. An Angel was ordained in his place, and in the following year the Apostles retired to Albury Park where a conference was held and a testimony drawn up under direct inspiration. Copies of this were delivered to the King in person, to Cardinal Acton, for the Pope, to Prince Metternich for the Emperor of Austria, to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and to each and every patriarch, sovereign and bishop throughout Christendom. Subsequently an elaborate and beautiful liturgy was framed by the Apostles, which including some detail of the ceremonies of the Latin, Greek, and English churches, combines, it is stated, the excellencies of all.

The Catholic Apostolic Church, whose mission was to reunite all sects, "the scattered members of the body of Christ," soon increased in numbers, among

them being many men of position and wealth. And as the Newman Street studio became too small for its congregation, a site was bought in Gordon Square on which rose one of the stateliest, most effective of the modern Gothic churches, designed by Brandon, built of Bath stone, and costing upwards of forty thousand pounds.

CHAPTER IX

His Majesty's Condition—Hatred of his Ministers—
Fear of Russia—Speech to Lord Gosford—Lord
Glenelg complains of the King—His Majesty's
Reception of Lord Aylmer—"What damned Stuff
is this?"—The Monarch's Consideration for his
Successor—Misunderstandings with the Duchess of
Kent—Public Expression of his Anger with her—
End of a Royal Dinner-party—Coming of Age of
the Princess Victoria—The King's Letter to his
Niece—Handsome offer to her—The Princess
Victoria at the Royal Academy—Death of Mrs.
Fitzherbert—Burning of her Correspondence—
Relics of a Royal Romance—Earl Fortescue's
Story—The missing Miniature—Death of the King's
Daughter, Lady de Lisle and Dudley—His Majesty's
Illness—Unable to attend the Ascot Races—All
Guests leave Windsor Castle—His Majesty desires
to die in Harness—Preparations for the New
Reign—Lord Lansdowne is perplexed—Uncer-
tainty regarding the Future Sovereign—Death of
William IV.—How the News was brought to
Kensington Palace—Proclaiming Queen Alex-
andrina Victoria—The King is laid at Rest—Queen
Adelaide's Last Days

CHAPTER IX

IN 1837 the Sailor King's reign drew towards its close ; the last months of his life failing to bring him that peace of mind and contentment of heart which are frequently and mercifully a heritage of the aged. For physical ailment and mental uneasiness beset him. Asthma, from which he had long suffered, became more violent and tenacious in its attacks, whilst his spirit was troubled by the condition of the country that, impatient of old restraints, anxious for change, and determined on progress, bounded forward towards what seemed to him an irrecoverable destruction, which he its sovereign was unable to prevent. Holding his ministers responsible for the liberal measures which he feared threatened the prerogatives of the crown, he heartily detested them.

Melbourne, always tactful, sought to allay his Majesty's irritation and alarm, and in the transaction of business his rare command of features, frank manner and tactful phrases generally enabled him to sooth fears, smooth difficulties, and charm away the evil spirit of distrust. His considerate allowance for the weakness of wounded pride and the fretfulness of

declining years was appreciated by the Sovereign, who, towards him individually, was neither ungracious nor unkind, though towards the members of the Cabinet he was often hostile and rude. One subject which was a source of constant disagreement between the monarch and his Ministers was the defence of the country, and he frequently declared the militia had been long neglected and desired to see them organised. When the Home Secretary replied that Parliament would not agree to the necessary expense of such a measure, as it did not fear invasion, the King replied that "he did, and thought those who objected to preparations on the ground of cost were penny wise and pound foolish. He heard that Russia had one hundred thousand men ready for embarkation in the Baltic ; he did not know how his lordship felt, but he owned they made him shake in his shoes."

His Majesty's hostility towards his ministers was made disagreeably evident on the day he received Lord Gosford, on his appointment as Governor of Canada. To him the king, full of subdued wrath, said abruptly : "Mind what you are about in Canada. By God, I will never consent to alienate the Crown lands, nor to make the Council elective. Mind me, my lord, the Cabinet is not my Cabinet ; they had better take care, or by God I will have them impeached. You are a gentleman, I believe, I have no fear of you ; but take care what you do."

On this being repeated to the premier he felt that though personally he was willing to overlook the

Sovereign's petulance and perversity, he had no right to keep in ignorance of such feelings those with whom he had jointly undertaken the guardianship of the State; but whose honour and whose discretion were not placed unreservedly in his hands. Therefore at their next meeting he said to them: "Gentlemen, you may as well know how you stand"; and then proceeded to read a memorandum of the King's remarks. The Ministers stared at one another in surprise but agreed to take no notice of this ebullition of temper. Lord Gosford was assured of the confidence of those responsible for his appointment, and advised to adhere to his instructions which would be clear and specific.

On these being read by Lord Glenelg to the King, he violently protested against the use of certain words, saying: "No, by the Lord; strike out 'conciliatory,' strike out 'liberal'"; and then added, "you cannot wonder at my making these difficulties with a Ministry that has been forced upon me." Two days later he was so rude to Lord Glenelg that the latter complained to Melbourne, who on next seeing His Majesty was surprised to hear him express a hope that he had not been uncivil to Lord Glenelg, when the prime minister merely bowed.

"The King took the reproof most becomingly," says Melbourne's biographer, MacCullagh Torrens; "for when Glenelg went in a second time, His Majesty was exceedingly kind to him. The storm being over the afternoon proved more serene. At the

Council all was sunshine ; and though the Chief Justice Denman being detained at Guildhall kept the King waiting a long while, he received his apologies when he came very kindly, asked where he lived, and invited him to Windsor, adding when he had gone through the Recorder's Report, "I hope you won't hang me, my Lord" ?

This sudden outburst of good-humour, like sunshine in spring, was evanescent, and was succeeded by long periods of sullen temper and gloom, until, in March 1837, three months before his demise, he seized an opportunity of publicly showing his detestation of his ministers. On this occasion, while receiving the Knights of the Bath, he quickly noticed among them Lord Aylmer, who had been recalled from the Governorship of Canada, and been replaced by Lord Gosford. On seeing the former approach the throne, the King immediately called out for the only two ministers present, Lord Minto and Lord Palmerston, and ordered them to stand before him, one on each side of Aylmer, that they might not lose a word of what he was about to say. He then told Aylmer that he wished to take the most public opportunity he could find of assuring him that he approved most entirely of his conduct in Canada, that he had acted towards a set of traitors and conspirators as a British officer should : His Majesty's address bringing as keen a satisfaction to Aylmer as it did humiliation to the members of the cabinet who were obliged to listen in silence.



From a mezzotint after the picture by Sir Wm. Beechey, R.A.]

QUEEN ADELAIDE.

[To face p. 385.

In something of the same spirit the King ordered the bust of the Duke of Bedford, that stood in the gallery of Windsor Castle, to be taken from its pedestal and cast into the lime-kilns, because his grace had subscribed to the funds of that arch-fiend, the Irish agitator. It was probably at a moment when he was wholly weary of monarchy, that during a dinner-party he gave at the Pavilion to a company which included the American minister, His Majesty declared, "it was always a matter of serious regret to him, that he had not been born a free, independent American, so much did he respect that nation, which had given birth to Washington, the greatest man that ever lived."

It was doubtless a secret grief to the King that his consort had not borne him an heir destined to survive him. But as Her Majesty was still young enough to become a mother there still remained a possibility of such an event, though the probability does not seem to have appealed to His Majesty, for when in the spring of 1835, a rumour flashed through the nation that the Queen was with child, it first reached the person most concerned through the columns of the paper he read after breakfast, on which he testily called out: "What damned stuff is this?"

Kind at heart, he had, as previously stated, always shown affection and consideration for his successor to the Crown, and had ever been anxious to see her at his Court, a wish that was not shared by the Duchess of Kent. Between her and His Majesty misunderstandings which she took no trouble to disperse, had

arisen from the time he ascended until the hour he vacated the throne. In speaking to Lord Melbourne, the King had said some eighteen months before his death: "I cannot expect to live very long, but I hope that my successor may be of full age when she mounts the throne. I have great respect for the person upon whom, in the event of my death, the Regency would devolve, but I have great distrust of the persons by whom she is surrounded. I know that everything which falls from my lips is reported again, and I say this thus candidly and publicly because it is my desire and intention that these my sentiments should be made known."

His great respect for the Duchess of Kent could not prevent the very human feeling of irritation and displeasure with which he read continually of her "royal progresses" through the country with the Princess Victoria, when mayors and civic authorities turned out to meet them, addresses were presented, crowds cheered, and honours and attentions were paid them, which he considered were alone due to himself. His feelings, long suppressed, needed but a fresh impetus to make them blaze out beyond control. This was given them when, on August 12th, 1836, he invited the Princess Victoria and her mother to spend a week at Windsor, during which time the Queen's birthday would be celebrated on the 13th, and his own on the 21st. To this the duchess replied that she wished to keep her birthday, the 15th, at Claremont, but that she would arrive at Windsor

on the 20th. No mention was made of Her Majesty's birthday, which greatly exasperated the King, who however made no reply.

What follows is related by Charles Greville. On the 20th the Sovereign went to town to prorogue Parliament, "having desired that they would not wait dinner for him at Windsor. After the prorogation he went to Kensington Palace to look about it; when he got there he found that the Duchess of Kent had appropriated to her own use a suite of apartments, seventeen in number, for which she had applied last year, and which he had refused to let her have. This increased his ill-humour already excessive. When he arrived at Windsor and went into the drawing-room (at about ten o'clock at night), where the whole party was assembled, he went up to the Princess Victoria, took hold of both her hands, and expressed his pleasure at seeing her there, and his regret at not seeing her oftener. He then turned to the duchess and made her a low bow, almost immediately after which he said that 'a most unwarrantable liberty had been taken with one of his palaces; that he had just come from Kensington, where he found apartments had been taken possession of, not only without his consent, but contrary to his commands, and that he neither understood nor would endure conduct so disrespectful to him.' This was loud, publicly, and in a tone of serious displeasure.

"It was, however, only the muttering of the storm which was to break the next day. Adolphus

Fitzclarence went into his room on Sunday morning, and found him in a state of great excitement. It was his birthday, and though the celebration was what was called private, there were a hundred people at dinner, either belonging to the Court or from the neighbourhood. The Duchess of Kent sat on one side of the King, and one of his sisters on the other, the Princess Victoria opposite. Adolphus Fitzclarence sat two or three from the duchess, and heard every word of what passed. After dinner, by the Queen's desire, "His Majesty's health and long life to him" was given, and as soon as it was drunk he made a very long speech, in the course of which he poured forth the following extraordinary and *foudroyante* tirade:—

"I trust in God that my life may be spared for nine months longer, after which period, in the event of my death, no regency would take place. I should then have the satisfaction of leaving the royal authority to the personal exercise of that young lady (pointing to the Princess) the heiress presumptive of the Crown, and not in the hands of a person now near me, who is surrounded by evil advisers, and who is herself incompetent to act with propriety in the station in which she would be placed. I have no hesitation in saying that I have been insulted—grossly and continually insulted—by that person, but I am determined to endure no longer a course of behaviour so disrespectful to me. Amongst many other things I have particularly to complain of the

manner in which that young lady has been kept away from my Court; she has been repeatedly kept from my drawing-rooms, at which she ought always to have been present, but I am fully resolved that this shall not happen again. I would have her know that I am King, I am determined to make my authority respected, and for the future I shall insist and command that the Princess do upon all occasions appear at my Court, as it is her duty to do.' He terminated his speech by an allusion to the Princess and her future reign, in a tone of paternal interest and affection, which was excellent in its way.

"This awful philippic (with a great deal more, which I forget) was uttered with a loud voice and excited manner. The Queen looked in deep distress, the Princess burst into tears, and the whole company were aghast. The Duchess of Kent said not a word. Immediately after they rose and retired, and a terrible scene ensued; the duchess announced her immediate departure and ordered her carriage, but a sort of reconciliation was patched up, and she was prevailed upon to stay till next day.

"The following morning, when the King saw Adolphus, he asked him what people said to his speech. He replied that they thought the Duchess of Kent merited his rebuke, but that it ought not to have been given there; that he ought to have sent for her into his closet, and have said all that he felt and thought there, but not at table before a hundred people. He replied that he did not care where he said it or before whom,

that 'by God, he had been insulted by her in a measure that was past all endurance, and he would not stand it any longer.' "

The time so eagerly looked forward to by His Majesty, when the Princess Victoria should attain her majority, was not long in arriving ; for in May 1837 she reached her eighteenth birthday, and was then legally entitled to reign without a regency when her uncle died. The King sent her a grand piano as a birthday present, and the event was celebrated by a magnificent State ball at St. James's Palace, but neither the King nor his Consort were present, owing to indisposition. With the gleeful spirit natural to her age, the young Princess heartily enjoyed this scene of splendid ceremonial, with its blaze of lights and sparkle of jewels, its bands of music, and ever moving crowds of courtiers, ready to offer their homage to this future Sovereign, who, observed by all, danced with Lord FitzAlan, grandson of the Duke of Norfolk, and afterwards with Nicholas Esterhazy, son of the Austrian ambassador. Her coming of age was also made memorable in other ways, for the King considered the time had now arrived when it was due to her position that she should have an establishment of her own. This proposition was, however, resolutely opposed by the Duchess of Kent, who believed that in appointing a household the Sovereign would select those who were unfriendly to herself. She therefore conveyed her opinion to His Majesty in what were considered "very unsatisfactory terms." He then

wrote to the Princess offering her, in addition to the sum already allowed her by Parliament, ten thousand a year out of his private purse ; the amount to be placed at her personal disposal and independent of her mother. This communication was given by the Sovereign to his Lord Chamberlain, the Marquis Conyngham, with strict orders to deliver it into the Princess's own hands. Accordingly the marquis presented himself at Kensington Palace, where he was received by Sir John Conroy, chamberlain and confidential adviser to the Duchess of Kent. Lord Conyngham at once asked to be admitted to the Princess, who was invariably kept under the strictest surveillance. Astonished by the request Sir John enquired on whose authority it was made, and on being told went to inform the duchess.

A few minutes later Lord Conyngham was shown into the presence of the Princess Victoria, beside whom stood her mother ; when he said that by the King's commands he waited on her Royal Highness the Princess, to present the letter with which he had been charged. At that the duchess held out her hand to receive it, when he stated that he had been expressly commanded by His Majesty to deliver the letter to the Princess. Hearing this the duchess drew back and the Princess took it. Lord Conyngham then bowed and retired. As a result the heir to the Crown wrote to her "Dear Uncle William," gratefully accepting his offer ; pleased with which he enquired whom she would appoint to receive this money on her behalf.

Before an answer could be given a dispute arose, for the Duchess of Kent claimed that six thousand should be devoted to her use and the remaining four thousand to the Princess ; a suggestion that infuriated His Majesty, then suffering and worried. A correspondence followed, but the question was never settled.

A couple of weeks earlier the Princess Victoria had been present at the private view of the Royal Academy, whose exhibitions were at that time held at Somerset House. Here among other distinguished men she had met Samuel Rogers, pale, wrinkled and feeble, with whom she shook hands and exchanged a few sentences ; and hearing that Charles Kemble was also in the room, she sent for him, whose acting she greatly admired, and had him presented to her. Later on, in the first week of June, accompanied by her mother and her suite, she drove in an open carriage with outriders to Ascot, her appearance creating an immense sensation as she flashed along the dusty, crowded highway, and receiving immense applause as she gained the course and took her place in the royal enclosure.

In the early part of this year, 1837, some deaths had occurred that greatly depressed His Majesty ; the first of them being that of Mrs. Fitzherbert, for whom he had always shown the warmest friendship. A woman of great beauty and singular charm of manner, she had when almost a girl, married Edward Weld, of Lulworth Castle in Dorsetshire, who within twelve months of their wedding day left her a widow.

Some years later she married for the second time Thomas Fitzherbert, of Norbury, who died in 1781. Still young, she soon after attracted the Prince of Wales, who professed the most ardent affection for her ; but a woman of the strictest propriety she refused to listen to his brilliant offers and protestations of love until he consented to marry her according to the rites of the Catholic Church, of which she was a member. This took place on December 4th, 1785, from which time she was regarded as his wife, and treated by his brothers and society at large with the respect and dignity due to that position.

Raikes, who was one of the Prince Regent's circle, says that the latter made her life one continued scene of trial and disappointment. "He was young, impetuous, and boisterous in his character, and very much addicted to the pleasures of the table. It was the fashion in those days to drink very hard, and Mrs. Fitzherbert never retired to rest till her royal spouse came home. But I have heard the late Duke of York say that, often when she heard the Prince and his drunken companions on the staircase, she would seek a refuge from their presence even under the sofa, when the Prince finding the drawing-room deserted, would draw his sword in joke, and searching about the room, would at last draw forth his trembling victim from her place of concealment."

When the Regent publicly married Caroline of Brunswick, Mrs. Fitzherbert separated from him, and was made an allowance of ten thousand a year. On

William IV. coming to the throne, this sum was reduced to six thousand per annum. He, however, continued to allow her the use of the royal liveries, and sent her word by his brother, the Duke of Sussex, that she was to put her servants into mourning for the late King, an evidence of grief he dispensed with regarding his own retainers: and on her attendance at the Court drawing-rooms she was always treated by him with the ceremony due to a royal consort.

From the date of their separation, the Prince Regent, who distrusted all men, was continually in dread lest she should use the documents and papers in her possession to injure and annoy him, and therefore made several attempts to recover them. On one of these occasions his messenger, Sir William Knighton, went so far in his zeal as to force his way into Mrs. Fitzherbert's bedroom at a time when she was ill; an action that determined her to make a final disposition of her papers, so that in case of her death no advantage might be taken of them and used against her own memory, or the interests of any one connected with her. Accordingly when she was sufficiently recovered she selected the documents she wished to preserve, which were the certificate of her marriage with the Regent, a letter from him relating to that marriage, memorandums written by herself attached to a letter of the priest who had celebrated the ceremony, a will made by her royal husband, and a mortgage on the Pavilion at Brighton. These she had carefully sealed and deposited in Coutts' bank, in



From an engraving after the painting by Berthon.]

LADY MORGAN,

[To face p. 595

the name of her life-long friend, Lord Albemarle ; the remainder of her voluminous correspondence, royal love-letters, narrations of social events, commentaries on political movements, a rich mine of contemporary history were then burned by Mrs. Fitzherbert's desire, in the presence of the Duke of Wellington and Lord Albemarle. So great was the pile of papers consumed in this way, that after it had been burning for some hours, the duke, turning to Lord Albemarle, said : " I think we had better hold our hand for awhile, or we shall set the chimney on fire " ; while for weeks afterwards the room smelt of burnt sealing-wax. When nothing but ashes was left of these priceless records, their owner assured those who witnessed the holocaust that " everything was destroyed, and if after her death any pretended letters or documents were produced, they might give the most authoritative contradiction to their authenticity."

One of Mrs. Fitzherbert's dearest friends in the days of her youth was Lady Hugh Seymour, who died comparatively young leaving a large family. To all of these Mrs. Fitzherbert acted as a mother, while she adopted as her own the second daughter, who afterwards became Mrs. Dawson Damer. To this favourite she gave a handsome dowry, and in dying left her twenty thousand pounds, together with her town house in Tilney Street. It was here that Mrs. Dawson Damer, a handsome, genial woman, showed Lady Morgan a thousand beautiful relics of its late unhappy mistress. Among these were " a coffer

filled with pledges of love and gallantry from the Prince in the heyday of his passion—a Pandora's box without hope at the bottom." There were also "a number of their own portraits, set in all sorts of sizes and costumes, and oh, what costumes—toupées, chinons, flottaus, tippy-bobby hats, balloon handkerchiefs, and relics of all the atrocious bad taste of succeeding years, from the days of Florizel and Perdita, to the 'fat, fair, and fifty,' of the neglected favourite, a series of disfigurements rendering their personal beauty absurd. The pictures of the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert were all splendidly set in brilliants, with hearts and ciphers, crowned with royal coronets and true lovers' knots. The initials G. P. were never omitted."

It was in her house on the Old Steyne at Brighton that Mrs. Fitzherbert passed away on March 27th, 1837, in her eighty-first year, preserving to the last some traces of her beauty and of her youthful spirit; for at the time she was called for by death, she was planning a visit to Paris whose gaiety delighted her. The Sailor King and his royal brothers when staying at Brighton never failed to visit her, as did likewise the most distinguished men and women of the day. Her charities were boundless, her piety ardent, and her hospitality great: while, adds Raikes, "the services of plate, the handsome dinners, and a numerous train of servants all grown old in her service, gave to her house at least a seigneurial if not a royal appearance."

An interesting story concerning the fateful romance of her life was told by Earl Fortescue to Lord Albemarle, who mentions it in his interesting "Fifty Years of My Life." According to this the Prince soon after his marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert presented her with an immense diamond, that she had cut in half and made into two locket, one of which contained a small miniature of herself and the other of her royal spouse. To him she gave her own portrait while she retained his. When time, callous and remorseless regarding its cruel changes, separated them, the Prince returned all the letters she had written, all the presents she had given him, with the exception of this locket. Too proud to make enquiries, she remained in ignorance of why it was retained ; had she spoken and been told, much that was painful might have been clad with some remnant of tenderness ; the loneliness of her inner life might have found some healing comfort ; but she went down to her grave unaware of what had become of it, the one person who could have told her remaining silent.

This was the Duke of Wellington, who, as executor to George IV., arrived at Windsor Castle soon after the King had died there, and was shown into the room where His Majesty lay dressed in the night clothes he wore when he expired, and in which according to his earnest desire, he was to be buried. "Left alone with the lifeless form of his late Sovereign," says Lord Albemarle, "the duke approached the bed, and then discovered round the

King's neck a very dirty and much worn piece of black ribbon. This, the duke, as he afterwards acknowledged, was seized with an irrepressible desire to draw out. When he had done so, he found attached to it the jewelled miniature of Mrs. Fitzherbert, which sufficiently accounted for the strange order given by the King about his burial.

"The poor King's dying request was fulfilled to the letter and he carried with him to his grave, the image of her, who was perhaps the only woman whom he had respected as well as loved. The portrait of George Prince of Wales was bequeathed to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer, and she left it in her will to her daughter Georgiana, the late Countess Fortescue. Not long after Mrs. Fitzherbert's death, the Duke of Wellington happening to sit next Mrs. Dawson Damer at dinner, and observing the locket with the Prince of Wales's miniature behind the one half of the diamond, asked her what she thought had become of the corresponding locket with her dear old friend's miniature in it. On her professing her inability to account for its mysterious disappearance, he himself proceeded to give the true explanation, though actually blushing with the most amusing confusion for having been guilty of yielding to an impulse *plus fort que lui*."

A much greater grief befell the Sailor King when on April 10th, 1837, his favourite daughter Sophia died. In August 1825 she had married Philip Charles Sidney, son of Sir John Shelley Sidney, of

Penshurst Place, in Kent. The bridegroom was at this date a captain in the Guards, but on the accession of his royal father-in-law had been appointed a Lord of the Bedchamber, and Surveyor-General of the Duchy of Cornwall; while in 1835 he was created Baron de Lisle and Dudley, in recognition of his lineal descent through his mother from the family of Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and from the Sidneys, Dudleys, Greys, and Talbots, who had enjoyed the ancient barony and viscounty of Lisle.

Her death which took place at Kensington Palace, of which she was Housekeeper, came as a bitter blow to the King, who for weeks after was continually found crying silently, tears falling on the book or paper he pretended to read.

On May 18th, 1837, William IV., then in his seventy-third year, held at St. James's Palace his last drawing-room, when contrary to his usual custom he sat while presentations were made to him. All present remarked the languid air with which he, who usually was so brisk and buoyant, went through the ceremonies, and the tired and worn expression of his face, formerly so healthful and cheery. No sooner had the drawing-room ended than he became impatient to return to Windsor. Sound sleep refreshed him that night; and next day the anniversary of the battle of La Hogue was celebrated by a dinner, at which he entertained several officers resident in the neighbourhood, together with the field officers of the garrison, to whom he made a long speech on

the naval wars of England and the history of the country.

The exertion and excitement of the evening exhausted him, and next morning he was without appetite for breakfast, while at lunch he was seized with a dizziness that caused him to fall back in his chair, to the alarm of all present. He rallied in a little while, and was able to sit down to dinner, when again he was seized with faintness. So far was he from realising the importance of these attacks that it was not until ten o'clock at night he consented at the urgent request of the Queen to abandon his intention of journeying to town next morning that he might be present at the reopening of the Chapel Royal. Next day, sorely against his will, he was persuaded to remain in his own apartments, which he never afterwards quitted. Sir Henry Halford, together with Dr. Chambers and Dr. Davies, attended him; but still reluctant to recognise the gravity of his condition he gave audiences to his Ministers and summoned a Cabinet Council for May 27th, to which he was wheeled in an easy chair, his debility being so great as to render him unable to walk.

A large party had been bidden to Windsor Castle for the Eton matches and Ascot races in the first week in June; but on the day when the races were held the King was too ill to attend them; to the grievous disappointment of the public and to their concern on learning the cause of his absence. However, with the consideration he showed to all save

his hated ministry, he insisted that the Queen should attend them, that the national sport might receive royal patronage.

On Thursday the 8th of the month, in obedience to the Queen's wishes, all guests left the Castle ; for His Majesty had now begun to show such alarming symptoms as difficulty in breathing, stoppage of circulation, coldness of the extremities, and swelling of the legs. News quickly spread through town and country of his alarming illness. Previously he had forbidden his doctors to issue bulletins regarding his health ; saying that so long as he was able to attend to business, he would not have the public alarmed on his account ; and now, when issued, he dictated them himself and made them as brief and hopeful as possible. He still continued to transact the business of the State, to give orders and to see his ministers, for he was resolved as he said to die in harness.

Though Dr. Chambers considered it was possible the King might recover, Lord Melbourne disagreed with that opinion, and bade Charles Greville prepare for a council to be held immediately on the dissolution of the monarch. The premier himself examined rules and precedents that would guide him in the ceremonies to be observed regarding the future Sovereign, and debated the question as to whether the Duchess of Kent should be permitted to attend the councils of the new monarch. Lord Lansdowne, the Lord President of the Council, also bestirred himself regarding the expected change, and was sorely perplexed concerning

the proper steps to be taken, if any, to ascertain whether the Queen was with child. In the hope of throwing light on this delicate business he requested Charles Greville to see if any precedent could be found in the records dealing with the accession of James II. ; when he was told that the case had been provided for in the Regency Bill, which stated that on the event of the King's death without children, the Princess Victoria was to be proclaimed Queen, but the oath of allegiance taken with a saving clause of the rights of any posthumous child of King William.

All felt that the situation was serious ; all feared that the death of the monarch and the accession of a Princess, who was almost a child, might distract and embarrass the country, still heaving from the excitement caused by many recent changes. There were also sinister forebodings regarding the designs of her uncle, the Duke of Cumberland. None seemed to realise the peril of the situation more than the King. "I have had some quiet sleep," he said, on the morning of the 16th, to the Queen. "Come and pray with me, and thank the Almighty for it." Having obeyed him, she asked : "And shall I not pray to the Almighty that you may have a good day?" to which he, turning wistful eyes to her enquiring face, replied : "Oh, do ; I wish I could live ten years for sake of the country. I feel it my duty to keep well as long as I can."

To all but himself the impossibility of prolonging his life seemed plain ; and therefore all eyes were

turned towards the rising sun, before the setting sun had quite disappeared. On that glorious June morning when the King had expressed his desire for length of days, Charles Greville, walking under the trees in the Park, was met by Sir Robert Peel, who fell into conversation with him on the subject uppermost in every mind. Among other things he said it was desirable that the Princess Victoria should appear as much as possible emancipated from all restraint, and exhibit a capacity for the discharge of her high functions ; that the most probable as well as the most expedient course she could adopt would be to rely entirely on the advice of Lord Melbourne, and that she might with great propriety say that she thought it incumbent on her to follow the example which had been set by her two uncles, her predecessors ; William IV. having retained in office the Ministers of his brother ; and George IV., although his political predilections were known to lead another way, having also declined to dismiss the Government of his father. Sir Robert supposed that her uncle, Leopold King of the Belgians, would be her principal adviser, but hoped His Majesty would not hurry to England, as such a step would indicate an impatience to establish his influence, and create all sorts of jealousies and intrigues.

“What renders speculation so easy and events uncertain,” comments Greville, “is the absolute ignorance of everybody, without exception, of the character, disposition, and capacity of the Princess. She has

been kept in such jealous seclusion by her mother (never having slept out of her bedroom, nor been alone with anybody but herself and the Baroness Lehzen), that not one of her acquaintance, none of the attendants at Kensington, not even the Duchess of Northumberland, her governess, have any idea what she is, or what she promises to be. It is therefore no difficult matter to form and utter conjectures which nobody can contradict or gainsay, but by other conjectures equally uncertain and fallacious. The Tories are in great consternation at the King's approaching death, from the advantage which they foresee their opponents must derive from it, as far as the extension of their term of power is concerned, and they prognosticate, according to their custom, all sorts of dismal consequences, none of which of course will come to pass. Nothing will happen, because in this country nothing ever does. The Whigs, to do them justice, behave with great decency ; whatever they may really feel, they express a very proper concern, and I have no doubt Melbourne really feels the concern he expresses. The public in general don't seem to care much, and only wonder what will happen."

Meanwhile prayers were offered in the churches for His Majesty, who rallied one day and lost strength the next, who now was almost choked by an attack of asthma, and again was able to breathe freely. And with indomitable courage he rose daily from his bed, and occasionally before his customary time,

when placed in a chair he was wheeled about his apartments. At the usual hour he received his secretary, Sir Herbert Taylor, heard his correspondence read, dictated answers and signed documents; the last to receive his signature being the appointments of two colonial judges, the remission of a court martial sentence, and a free pardon to a condemned criminal. On the evening of June 15th, the premier writing to the Lord President said: "The report this morning from Windsor is that there is a mitigation of the more painful symptoms, such as cough, difficulty of breathing; and though there is no essential amendment, the King is more comfortable. I send you a sketch of what I propose the Princess (Victoria) should say to the council, with Palmerston's observations—let me know what you think. John Russell suggests that it would be better and quieter altogether that the council should be held at Kensington. I suppose there is no objection. I will try and ascertain the Princess's feelings."

Though occasionally suffering great pain, no murmur escaped the King; his cheerfulness at intervals surprised all, and that consideration for others which had distinguished him through life was shown to the last. By day and night the Queen attended him, his children were seldom out of his sight, chaplains prayed with him, and eventually the Archbishop of Canterbury, attired in his robes, read a short service and administered the Sacrament to His Majesty on the last Sunday morning he was destined

to see. Throughout that day his strength ebbed rapidly, he spoke less than usual, and the shadow of death seemed to have fallen on and tranquillised him. At nine o'clock in the evening the Archbishop again visited and read prayers to him, to which he listened attentively and at the conclusion dismissed his grace with the words, "God bless thee, dear excellent man, a thousand, thousand thanks."

Next morning some ray of his old vivacity returned, and on awaking early he remarked that the date was the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo. "Let me but live over this memorable day," he said to Dr. Chambers, "I shall never live to see another sunset." In the phrases of a courtier the medical man hoped His Majesty would live to see many. "Oh, that is quite another thing," replied the King; a phrase he had always used to express dissent. He then expressed a desire to rise. "I shall get up once more to do the business of the country," he said, determined, as he had often stated, that he would die in harness. His increasing weakness was evident to the Queen, who sent for the Archbishop of Canterbury still staying at the Castle, when service was once more read to the invalid who listened tranquilly, his eyes fixed on space, as if searching the unknown to which he was hastening, his breath drawn with labour. When at a certain portion of the prayers the Queen, whose hand he held in his own, broke down, he seemed startled for an instant and then said: "Bear up; oh, come, bear up, bear up."

When eleven o'clock came and Sir Herbert Taylor had not made his appearance, the King summoned him. "Give me your hand," he said, when the secretary appeared. "And now get the papers ready." Sir Herbert explained that as it was Monday there was no post, and no boxes, and therefore no letters to be read or answered. "Ah, true, I had forgot," replied the King; and soon afterwards he fell into a tranquil sleep, the forerunner of that which was soon to close his eyes for ever. All that day the Queen and his children watched beside and around him, but when at times his eyes opened and rested on them, his failing senses were scarcely conscious of their presence. Towards night he rallied once more, when the Archbishop of Canterbury for the last time read to him, His Majesty remaining passive, unable to join in the prayers; and it was when his Grace was moving noiselessly from the presence to which he could no longer bring consolation, that the Sovereign murmured, "Believe me, I am a religious man." The spirit had now almost withdrawn from the body, but its final departure did not take place until half-past two o'clock on the morning of June 20th, 1837.

A few hours later Lord Conyngham and the Archbishop of Canterbury left Windsor for Kensington Palace, to communicate the news of His Majesty's death to the new Sovereign. Arriving before five in the morning they had some difficulty in rousing the sleeping household. Eventually a drowsy porter admitted and silently showed them into a room, while

he undertook to deliver their urgent request to see the Princess Victoria. They had waited a considerable time in the chill silence of a great apartment before the door slowly opened to admit the Princess's governess, Madame, afterwards Baroness Lehzen, a prim German, remarkable for her strict discipline, whose devotion to her pupil did not prevent the latter from holding her in awe. In reply to their impatient desire to see the Princess, they were calmly told by Madame Lehzen that "her charge was in such a sweet sleep she could not be disturbed." Lord Conyngham sharply replied: "We have come on business of State to the Queen, and even her sleep must give way to that," on which they were left alone once more.

His words being repeated to the Duchess of Kent, she woke the Princess, who, without waiting to dress, wrapped a shawl over her dressing-gown, and with her feet thrust into slippers, and her fair hair falling about her shoulders, went down to where the archbishop and the chamberlain awaited her. As she entered Lord Conyngham dropped on one knee, kissed the hand she gave him, and saluted her as Queen, his Grace of Canterbury doing the same; and there and then began that long and glorious reign of the greatest, most stainless of England's queens.

One of the first enquiries made by the new Sovereign was for the health of her uncle's widow; when the archbishop said it was by her desire he was there; Her Majesty thinking that an account of the

peaceful manner in which the King had passed away would be consoling to his successor ; from whom she asked permission to remain at Windsor Castle until after the funeral. In answer to this request the Queen wrote a letter to her aunt full of affection, begging her to consult nothing but her own health and convenience, and to remain at Windsor as long as she pleased. This she addressed to Her Majesty the Queen ; and on its being pointed out to her that the word Dowager should be prefixed, she refused to make any alteration saying, "I will not be the first person to remind her of it."

The usual quiet of Kensington palace, surrounded by its parks and divided from the capital by fields and market gardens, was disturbed on this June day by the constant roll of carriages and tramp of mounted messengers. As early as nine o'clock Lord Melbourne arrived to instruct Her Majesty in the forms to be observed and to read to her the address of the Lords to be presented to her, as well as her own speech, both of which had been in readiness some time.

On returning from his visit to the new Sovereign, the premier immediately wrote to the Lord President Henry Petty Fitzmaurice, third marquis of Lansdowne : "I have seen the Queen ; nothing could be more proper and feeling than her behaviour. She declared her intention of keeping everything as it is, but has left all the business until after the Council. One thing, however, she mentioned, which I think it well to tell you of. She wishes Lady Lansdowne to be her

principal lady. I told her there could be no better choice, but that I very much feared Lady Lansdowne would be unwilling to undertake it. I say nothing more from myself than that her doing so would be in the highest degree advantageous.

“P.S. Understanding that the Duke of Wellington put on deepest clothes upon the last occasion, I have done so ; but I think nobody else need.”

At eleven o'clock the young Queen met her first Council, which was held at Kensington Palace ; some interesting and intimate details of which are given by Charles Greville, who says ; “ Never was anything like the first impression she produced, or the chorus of praise and admiration which is raised about her manner and behaviour, and certainly not without justice. It was very extraordinary, and something far beyond what was looked for. Her extreme youth and inexperience, and the ignorance of the world concerning her, naturally excited intense curiosity, to see how she would act on this trying occasion, and there was a considerable assemblage at the palace, notwithstanding the short notice which was given. The first thing to be done was to teach her her lesson, which for this purpose Melbourne had himself to learn. I gave him the Council papers, and explained all that was to be done, and he went and explained all this to her. He asked her if she would enter the room accompanied by the Great Officers of State, but she said she would come in alone.

“ When the Lords were assembled the Lord

President informed them of the King's death, and suggested as they were so numerous, that a few of them should repair to the presence of the Queen and inform her of the event, and that their lordships were assembled in consequence ; and accordingly the two royal dukes, the two archbishops, the Chancellor, and Melbourne went with him. The Queen received them in the adjoining room alone. As soon as they had returned, the proclamation was read and the usual order passed, when the doors were thrown open and the Queen entered, accompanied by her two uncles, who advanced to meet her. She bowed to the Lords, took her seat, and then read her speech in a clear, distinct, and audible voice, and without any appearance of fear or embarrassment. She was quite plainly dressed and in mourning.

“ After she had read her speech and taken and signed the oath for the security of the Church of Scotland, the Privy Councillors were sworn, the two royal dukes first by themselves ; and as these two old men, her uncles, knelt before her, swearing allegiance and kissing her hand, I saw her blush up to the eyes, as if she felt the contrast between their civil and their natural relations, and this was the only sign of emotion which she evinced. Her manner to them was very graceful and engaging ; she kissed them both, and rose from her chair and moved towards the Duke of Sussex, who was farthest from her and too infirm to reach her. She seemed rather bewildered at the multitude of men who were sworn, and who came one

after another to kiss her hand, but she did not speak to anybody, nor did she make the slightest difference in her manner, or show any in her countenance, to any individual of any rank, station, or party.

"I particularly watched her when Melbourne and the ministers and the Duke of Wellington and Peel approached her. She went through the whole ceremony, occasionally looking at Melbourne for instruction when she had any doubt what to do, which hardly ever occurred, and with perfect calmness and self-possession, but at the same time with a graceful modesty and propriety particularly interesting and ingratiating. When the business was done she retired as she had entered, and I could see that nobody was in the adjoining room. . . . Peel told me how amazed he was at her manner and behaviour, at her apparent deep sense of her situation, her modesty, and at the same time her firmness. She appeared, in fact, to be awed but not daunted, and afterwards the Duke of Wellington told me the same thing, and added that if she had been his own daughter he could not have desired to see her perform her part better."

It was arranged that a Council should be held and the proclamation made next day at ten o'clock at St. James's, when the young Queen asked to see the Master of the Horse, Lord Albemarle; who accordingly waited on Her Majesty to take her orders. "I have no orders to give"; she said to him. "You know all this so much better than I do, that I leave it all to you. I am to be at St. James's at ten

to-morrow, and must beg you to find me a conveyance proper for the occasion."

Accordingly she left Kensington Palace next morning in a State coach, the Duchess of Kent seated beside her, an escort of Guards attending her. All the approaches to St. James's were thronged, as well as the quadrangle of the palace nearest Marlborough House, and underneath the windows of the Privy Council Chamber; prominent among the throng there being Daniel O'Connell, who waved his hat and cheered vociferously. A salute fired in St. James's Park announced the Sovereign's approach; and soon after the heralds with the Duke of Norfolk as Earl Marshal of England at their head, proclaimed the accession of "Her Royal Majesty Alexandrina Victoria, Queen of the United Kingdom"; the style and title in which the Sovereign was spoken of in all the official documents prepared, until at her desire they were changed, the first name being omitted, and the second, which up to then had found no favour in her subjects' eyes, being retained. At the same time as she was proclaimed, Her Majesty appeared at the window of the Privy Council Chamber, surrounded by her Ministers, her mother in the background. "Never shall I forget," said one of the crowd, then a youth, who afterwards succeeded as Lord Albemarle, "the enthusiastic cheers which greeted the slight girlish figure of the illustrious young lady, nor the thrill of chivalrous loyalty that ran through the assembled multitude. At the sound of the first

shouts the colour faded from the Queen's cheeks, and her eyes filled with tears. The emotion thus called forth imparted an additional charm to the winning courtesy with which the girl Sovereign accepted the proffered homage."

At twelve o'clock she presided at a Council, "with as much ease as if she had been doing nothing else all her life"; after which she received the archbishops and bishops, to whom she said nothing, but showed an extreme dignity and gracefulness of manner. This ceremony finished and the duties of the day at an end, she retired with slow stateliness; but forgetful that the door through which she passed had glass panels that allowed her retreat to be seen, she had no sooner quitted the council chamber than she scampered light-heartedly away, like a child released from school. Meanwhile the remains of His late Majesty lay in state in the Waterloo Chamber at Windsor, from whence at nine o'clock at night, amidst the blare of trumpets, the firing of guns, the muffled sound of drums, and the music of the "Dead March" in *Saul*, they were conveyed with all ceremony to St. George's Chapel, where they were met by the Dean of Windsor, and the prebendaries and choristers who carried lighted tapers. Then, in the presence of a great crowd of bishops, peers of the realm, ministers of state, members of the household, and officers in the Army and Navy the Dean of Windsor slowly and impressively read the burial service, the Clarencieux Deputy Garter King of Arms

pronounced the styles and titles of His late Majesty, and declared Queen Victoria his true and legitimate successor, when the body was noiselessly lowered into the vaults below on July 8th, 1837.

By his will he left two thousand to each of his sons and daughters. "That this bequest," says the Annual Register, "is not of greater amount will scarcely excite surprise when it is known that His Majesty has been in the habit of dividing, from year to year, his savings among his offspring. The sum of forty thousand, to be received in virtue of a policy of life insurance, is bequeathed to trustees, the interest to be paid annually in equal shares amongst his children."

The Dowager Queen, who had witnessed the funeral ceremony of the King from the seclusion of the royal closet in St. George's Chapel, and who was the only Queen Consort in English history who had ever seen her husband laid in the tomb, quitted Windsor Castle early in July. Marlborough House and Bushey House had been given her as residences, but she seldom lived in either; for as her health, always delicate, now gave way, and she became a victim of bronchitis, she continually sought relief in change. Her first winter after the death of the King was spent at St. Leonards, the following year she visited Malta, later she stayed at Canford Hall in Dorset, at Witley Court in Worcester, and at Bentley Priory near Stanmore, where, on November 30th, 1849, she passed quietly away.

According to her wishes her body was not to be embalmed or laid out in state, but was to be taken to its last resting-place in St. George's Chapel without pomp or ceremony, and to be accompanied only by a few relatives and friends, amongst whom were named her nephew, Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, and Earl Howe.

THE END.

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